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ABSTRACT

This guide is the result of three projects that have been working to address the problem of intergenerational illiteracy in writing. While writing skills are limited among the general population, they are even more limited among limited-English-speaking students (both school-aged and adult learners). The guidebook is a self-help manual for teachers interested in helping such students write better. The guide offers ideas on how to help students manage the writing process; provides strategies for helping students generate ideas, develop audience awareness, and compose; and gives hints on encouraging students to revise papers they have already begun. The guide provides general information on the writing process as well as specific suggestions, examples, strategies, and procedures for an effective writing program. An introductory section provides an overview of research findings in writing. Implications for teaching writing are examined in section II. Subsequent sections focus on aspects of writing instruction. A 32-item bibliography is appended. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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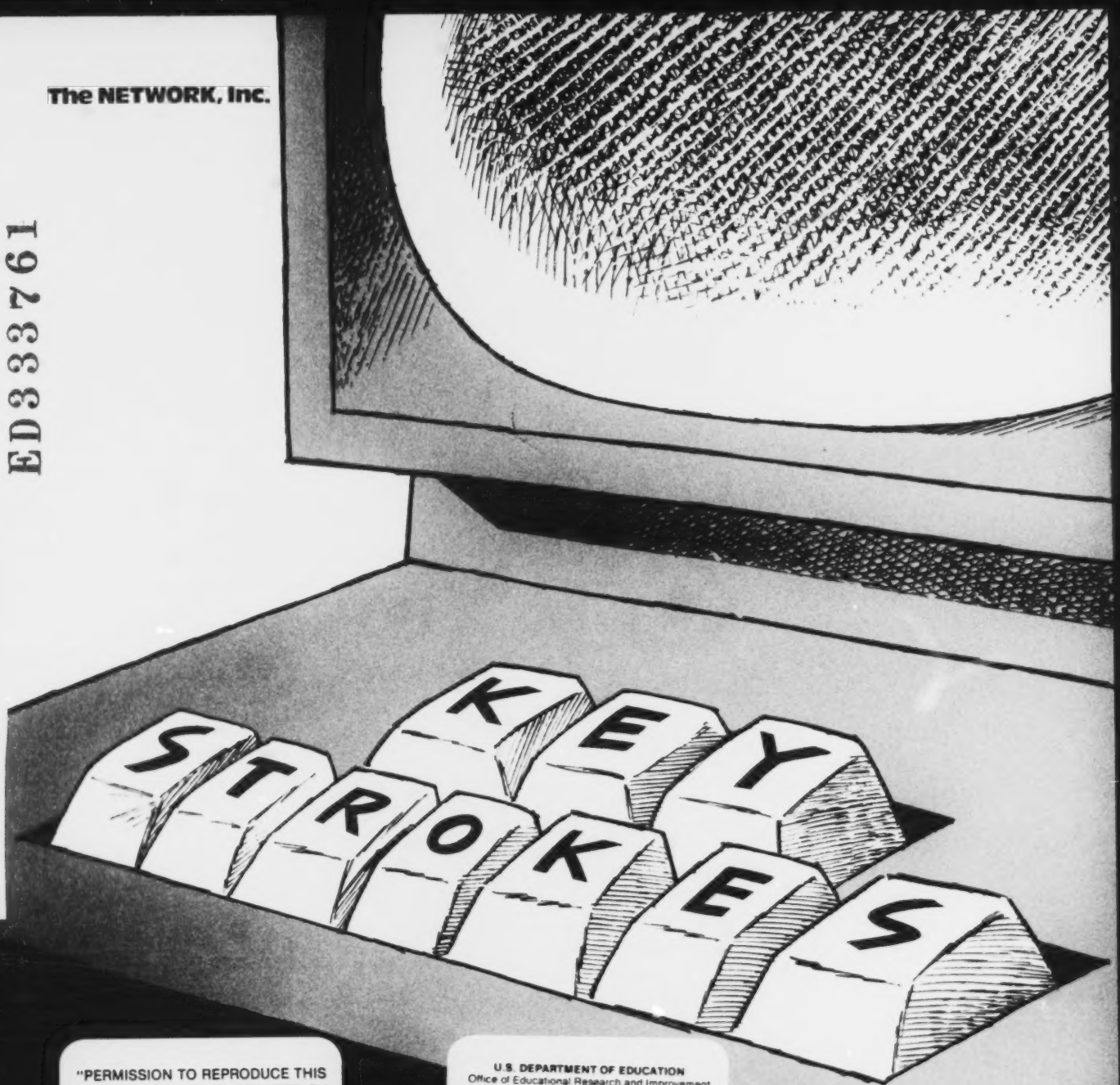

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A GUIDEBOOK FOR TEACHING WRITING WITH COMPUTERS

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A Guidebook for Teaching Writing With Computers

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Acknowledgments

We wish to acknowledge the enthusiasm and persistence of the many teachers who have been involved in The NETWORK's writing and computer projects. We have been working together for over two years and much has been accomplished. To those brave people in the trenches whose energies and concerns are directed to the education of limited English proficient students, our very warm thanks.

Questions and Answers About the Guidebook

Q. What is the purpose of the *Guidebook?*

A. The *Guidebook* is a self-help manual for teachers interested in helping students write better. It offers teachers ideas on how to help students manage the writing process. It provides teachers with strategies for helping students generate ideas, develop audience awareness, and compose. Finally, it provides hints on how to encourage students to go back and work on papers they have already begun, to conceive of revision not just as a copying-over-again-more-neatly, but as a chance to see for the first time what it is that they are trying to say.

Q. What is in the *Guidebook?*

A. The *Guidebook* provides general information on the writing process and specific suggestions, examples, strategies, and procedures for a writing program that works.

Q. How is the *Guidebook* organized?

A. The introduction provides the reader with an overview of research findings in writing. Implications for teaching writing are put forth in Section II. In Sections III, IV, V, VI, and VII, the focus is on the what's and the how's of writing instruction. Guidelines for teaching the students how to manage the writing process are presented. Suggestions on how to integrate the computer in each stage of the writing instruction are offered. Section VIII deals with the Parent Involvement component of a writing program and makes suggestions on how to involve the family in the writing experience of students. Section IX is a troubleshooting guide for those who use Apple IIc or IIe computers. Although we have used the Apple as an example, many of the problems are common to all computers. When in doubt, ask the computer expert at your school.

Q. Who is the *Guidebook* for?

A. The primary readers of the *Guidebook* will be teachers who are interested in having their students improve their writing skills. The *Guidebook* is based on work we have conducted in many different classrooms in three New England states. Most of the teachers we have worked with are teaching LEP students. Although the *Guidebook* has those teachers as its main target audience, writing teachers dealing with mainstream students might also find it useful. The process writers go through when composing is the same whether they are writing in their first or second language. Others who may find it useful are individuals involved in teacher training.

Q. What are some of the uses of the *Guidebook?*

A. The *Guidebook*, because it has a flexible nature and a rich mix of ideas and suggestions, should stimulate new thinking about starting, conducting, and managing writing instruction. More specifically, the *Guidebook* can help teachers:

- become aware of the full range of activities associated with writing;
- rework their own priorities with regard to the teaching of writing;
- understand that students need to be given time to write every week;
- become aware that planning or prewriting can be many things, from group brainstorming, to reading a book, to making a flow chart, to sketching an outline; and
- plan and carry out small-scale writing programs (20 minutes a week) that will favorably impact on student writing behavior.

SECTION I:

Introduction

One does not have to look very far for evidence of a growing national concern with the quality of writing in the United States. Educational journals and the mass media focus on concerns about illiteracy in general and the "writing problem" in particular. Most of the attention has centered on our schools because this is where we believe students should be learning to write. This assumption, however, does not appear to be accurate. In fact, researchers tell us that students are not learning to write in even a rudimentary way (NAEP, 1985). This means that semi-literate students are entering the workforce at all levels of employment. As employees, they are apparently unable to express necessary information clearly in written form. And if this problem is pervasive among the general population, it takes on epidemic proportions among students and workers whose first language is other than English.

The problem is multi-faceted. While writing skills are limited among the general population, they are even more limited among LEP students (both school-aged and adult learners). Writing problems surface in the schools and continue to emerge in the workplace. School-based interventions have little or no impact because the root of the problem is outside the traditional realm of the school. The opportunity for LEP students to practice their English at home is greatly diminished because the home language is not English. English literate role models are too often absent from the lives of the students in most need. The problem is both intergenerational and self-perpetuating. Heads of households among recent arrivals are often not parents but older siblings or other relatives. When the older generation is finally reunited with their children, the children have already acquired some English survival skills and can act as translators for their parents. There's little incentive, then, for the parents to learn to speak English, let alone learn to write it.

During the past three years, we at The NETWORK have been addressing the problem of intergenerational illiteracy in writing through three projects, funded by OBEMLA. This *Guidebook* is the product of some of that work.

What the Literature Has Shown

Interest in writing, from both a pragmatic and theoretical perspective, has been very keen during the past several years. We've seen repeated evidence, unfortunately, to support the public outcry about poor writing skills. Many of us have observed that elementary school children are not taught adequate composition skills. Applebee's 1981 study concludes that high schoolers rarely have above minimum writing skills and lack simple writing ability regardless of genre or content. On campus, Ohio State University has reported that 30 percent of its freshman are unprepared for college writing. Seventy percent of University of Texas freshmen must take basic composition courses. The University of California at Berkeley reports 50% of its freshmen are taking remedial writing courses, a 20 percent increase since 1968; and 75 percent of Berkeley freshmen are scoring poorly on the College Entrance Examination Board Composition Test. Clearly, students are not learning to write competently, suggesting that we need to change the way composition is taught. If students who are native speakers of English have difficulty writing, it stands to reason that students of limited English proficiency have an even greater task in their education: to acquire another language (English) while they are learning to write.

The most influential direction in both theory and practice in the field of writing for our work with computers and writing has been the movement away from product and toward process. In a "product" orientation, grammar, spelling, handwriting, and neatness hold paramount importance, while in a "process" approach, meaning and content are of primary importance for the writer. Through the process of revising or editing, the writer can refine his or her thoughts, structure, and grammar over successive drafts. At first blush, a process approach seems contradictory to the growing concern about poor writers both in schools and the workforce. A skeptic might ask: why not continue to drill on the correct forms, teach proper grammar and spelling and then won't the product be improved? Furthermore, most Adult Literacy writing programs are performance-based and product-oriented part-to-whole language learning programs(Lerche et. al. 1985). For decades we have been teaching writing out of stylistic textbooks and handbooks of grammar. Why not continue? Apparently this form of pedagogy has not worked.

So the question remains: how can we as educators help students become competent writers? Perhaps we should be looking at what professional writers, journalists, novelists, historians do when they write. How do they get the desired results? Can we capture some of their strategies and incorporate them into teaching and learning? What do unskilled writers do that is different? Can we work with them to change their unsuccessful writing strategies?

The Process Approach

In our projects we began to look at process and to examine the seminal works on the process of composing (writing). (Emig 1971, Graves 1977, Moffett 1968, Murray 1968). We saw an underlying question pushing the inquiry in the literature — **What do writers do when they write?** If we could find some answers would they not profoundly affect how we teach writing? Furthermore, shouldn't we examine the writing processes of both skilled and unskilled writers and see where they are the same, where they are different? The work of Sondra Perl (1979) and Mina Shaughnessy (1977) typifies the body of research on the unskilled writer and it is from their typologies that we looked more closely at the processes of unskilled writers and, more importantly, learned from the actual case studies themselves.

What sets unskilled writers apart from skilled ones? Unskilled writers spend little time considering the reader (Flower, 1978). They take less time to plan and their plans are less flexi-

ble than those of the good writers (Rose, 1980). They re-scan segments of their writing less often than the skilled writers do (Perl, 1981). When they *do* re-scan, it is usually more for the purpose of correcting surface-level errors than for assessing the fit between their plans and their product (Flower & Hayes, 1981). They are overly and prematurely concerned with accuracy (Perl, 1979). Once they put words on a page, they see them as permanent and seldom rework them. The first draft either becomes the final draft or resembles it very closely. The changes they make focus almost entirely on form rather than on content.

From the complex and interwoven maze of writing behaviors that we can observe, researchers have described the composing process as one that is far from idiosyncratic. For example, we now know that there are many things that experienced writers do that unskilled writers do not. Ann Raimes summarizes it thus: Experienced writers consider purpose and audience. They consult their own background knowledge. They let ideas incubate. They plan. As they write, they look back over what they have written to keep in touch with their "conceptual blueprint" (Beach, 1979) which helps them plan what to write next. We would add that most importantly, they request and use feedback to rewrite and revise what they have written.

But many textbooks have reduced the writing process to a formulaic linear set of steps. Contrary to what these books advise, writers do *not* follow a neat sequence of planning, composing, and then revising. The process that produces the finished composition, essay, or story is not linear at all. Instead, it is recursive, a "cyclical process during which writers move back and forth on a continuum, discovering, analyzing, and synthesizing ideas" (Hughey et. al., 1983). With such "retrospective structuring" (Perl, 1979), writers inevitably discover new ideas as they write and then change their plans and text accordingly. Writing, therefore, does not serve just to record preformed ideas; it helps create and form ideas too. We agree with Emig (1977) who views writing as a tool for learning and not just as a means to demonstrate what one has learned.

So what happened? If this research has given us any insight into the writing process, why haven't we done better? Why after all this informative work has the pedagogy of writing lagged so far behind? Is there more to the problem than meets the eye? Have we failed to go deep enough? The quality of writing in schools and in the workforce is still under attack.

It is not surprising when one examines the type of writing assignments high schoolers are given, that the quality of writing continues to be poor. Applebee and his associates (1981) found that the writing students do in content areas consists primarily of short answer, fill-in-the-blank, and multiple choice exercises. Writing of paragraph length or longer occurred only three percent of observed lesson time. Paragraph-length writing occurred almost exclusively in English class, and even then only ten percent of observed class time was spent on this activity. This is particularly problematic for the LEP student who probably is in a "special" English class in the first place. When do these learners have the much- needed opportunity to write connected text? When can they take the risks in the production of their second language to become facile with it?

Applebee's research reflects more on the way writing is taught than on student ability. Undemanding, unmotivating assignments were the norm in both his observational study of two high schools and in his national survey. While "filling in the blanks" may be an effective way of assessing mastery of factual information in content areas and typical of Adult Literacy programs, it does little to promote writing as a way to explore thoughts, opinions, and feelings, to discover meaning through language use, and to communicate through written discourse. Applebee's recommendations focus on improving the way writing is taught. Student ability can only improve if instructional practices improve. We need to bridge the gap between what

we know about how writers write, and how we teach writing. That is where our work begins — training the teachers, tutors and aides in the process approach to composing using the computer (word processor) as the primary tool.

A Need for Teacher Training

Many educators agree that writing — the ability to express oneself with clarity and grace — is not taught in our schools (Emig, 1977; Murray, 1968). Some teachers believe that writing cannot be taught and that the ability to write is an inherent capability that some possess and others do not (Stallard, 1974). There are few English teachers (not to mention bilingual or ESL teachers) who are formally prepared to teach writing. Perhaps they might have been trained as teachers of grammar or teachers of literature. A study by the National Council of Teachers of English (1978) revealed that only a half of the English teachers in the country majored in English, either literature or grammar, in college and only a handful had courses in composition beyond freshman English. Often teachers who are untrained in writing skills ignore the writing process altogether. The losers are the students, and most profoundly, those students who are limited in their proficiency in English. Most service-providers with whom we have talked would like to do more with writing and their LEP students, but they are not equipped instructionally to do so.

Rationale for the Word Processor/Computer

Writing for all students, and for the LEP student in particular, has one major handicap: it is a relatively slow, laborious process. We can speak much faster than we can write. Most people can speak at rates of up to three words per second without undue difficulty. However, it might take as long as ten seconds to write those same three words longhand. In addition, the text has to be edited, amended, restated, reworded, again and again. Students' disinclination to revise is well documented, as we note below, and many argue that if writing is made excessively laborious for students, they will lose their already battered motivation.

Why is revision such an unappealing task for students? To start with, it is a very complex task. Scardamalia (1982) suggests that what novice writers lack primarily is the ability to evaluate their own work. Research has shown, however, that when evaluative input of an appropriate kind is given, students can respond effectively to it (Daiute, 1985). Graves (1977) found children as young as age eight making extensive and successful revisions in response to appropriate feedback from teachers and peers. Graves concludes that even though most children are able to change something in their texts, they will not do so without help. This hesitancy is even more pronounced with unskilled students.

Most students do not revise because they do not see the larger context of their work. They cannot handle the scope of revision demanded, especially if the work is long and involved (NAEP, 1977). Even if they can think of additional information to be included, they do not know where to put it without prompting. Many students do not revise because their personal investment in the piece is not very great. They have been given a topic they had little interest in or have chosen the topic with little forethought. They have struggled through the handwriting and the spelling. They feel that just putting the words on paper is enough. Many able students are not accustomed to pushing beyond first attempts toward a level of excellence (Nold, 1978). In their experience, only the less skilled have to continue to work on their papers. Our own research shows that finishing a selection fast is a very important criterion for LEP writers, and the idea of returning to a selection to rewrite and improve it is virtually unknown to them (Kaiser and Raupp, 1986).

Another difficulty students have with revising is finding their errors. Daiute (1985) points out that memory, attention, and psychological constraints allow errors to slip, thus preventing writers from identifying their mistakes. Therefore, writers benefit from feedback that helps them focus their attention on individual text features. We agree with this general assessment, but caution teachers and tutors to break away from the obsession with surface-level error corrections and move toward revision of content and ideas.

Because writing teachers invest so much time responding to students' writing, researchers have investigated how composition teachers respond to their students' texts. These investigations reveal that, for the most part, teachers respond to student writing as if it were a final draft, thus reinforcing an extremely constricted notion of composing (Zamel, 1985). They also reveal the assumptions teachers hold about writing. For example, Sommers' 1982 study of teachers' comments — comments that were intended to motivate revision — indicates that they distract students' attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text, and focus that attention on the teacher's purpose. As a result, students revise according to changes that teachers impose on the text (Zamel, 1985).

Our Attempt at a Solution to the Problem

We believe that students of limited English proficiency will become better writers, faster, if they use the computer to compose. This belief stems from our understanding of how the composing process works, how it can be "taught", and our hands-on experience using the computer as a tool in the teaching of writing over the last seven years. In recent years the most exciting additions to the field of composition have come from computer applications, specifically word processing. And how or why might word processing skills help students write better?

First, as teachers, we can structure prewriting activities for students on the computer by creating prompting or cueing questions in a logical sequence, and then placing these questions in a file for prewriting. A student can access the file and respond to these as part of prewriting activity. We can also help students formulate their own prewriting activities. And best of all, we can link each of these activities to facets of our curriculum or to real-life experiences for the individual student — an attractive motivator.

Simple word processing software is effective and appealing because of the ease with which a writer can enter text...You just start typing. Many so-called writing programs bog the student down with drill on syntax and grammar. We believe that students write better and faster if they are allowed to write, and are allowed to write about what is meaningful to them. They can only write if they "prime the pump" or have the information from which they can form their own thoughts which will become their writing. With the word processor, they can spend their time at the computer writing and thinking and changing what they have written and writing some more. Drill and practice on forms, grammar and usage should come from some other block of instructional time because these are not writing.

Good word processing software also simplifies the whole stage of revision in the writing process. No longer will students "have to copy it over". No longer will they resist helpful corrective feedback from the teacher or a peer because, with a word processor, the alteration is easy to make and the results are so immediately gratifying. No longer will students be leery of adding new ideas because they "have to copy the whole thing over." Time and effort, two of the major hurdles in revising one's writing, will no longer serve as excuses in the improvement of texts. Students can produce a revised, "clean" copy quickly and easily.

And last but not least, we can all see the smile on our students' faces when they print their work. They exude pride as they show it to their peers and plan to take it home and show their family and friends. "Sure you can use my composition or letter for the bulletin board or the next exhibition." When was the last time we heard such glad tidings....

SECTION II:

New Ideas About Writing

SUMMARY:

1. A "whole language" approach to writing — and to all literacy development — stresses making meaning as its most important function and goal.

2. People learn to write by writing.

3. Writers can — and should — rework, revise, rethink, and polish their work to get to their "best effort."

4. The process of getting to the "best effort" or product involves creating and re-creating ideas and language through the recursive, interactive stages of pre-writing or rehearsing, writing or drafting, and revising (re-vision = seeing again.)

5. The "best effort" product, or final draft, provides tangible evidence that the writer can manipulate, control, and change language and therefore master it. Through the process of making language, the writer is empowered with both skills and confidence.

REMINDER: *People learn to write by writing, and learn best when making meaning with their writing. Writers go through a recursive process of prewriting, writing, and revision to get to their best efforts.*

The process approach to writing is a natural component or outgrowth of the "whole language" approach to literacy development. Making sense or meaning is the very heart of the whole language philosophy. Teachers must be aware that language is whole; that reading, writing, speaking, listening are interwoven into a meaning-making process, and any classroom activities must be conducted within a meaningful context. The language user constructs meaning in the process of interacting with language, whether as a speaker or listener, reader or writer. Language users are constantly (though usually unconsciously) trying to "fit" what their current language is saying with what they already know about their world. What's "whole" in whole language is the language user's world: and language can be a tool for understanding and expanding that world.

Young children are perhaps our best examples or teachers here. They learn to talk not because we "teach" them grammar and pronunciation rules, but because they want and need to make sense of their world. They learn "bottle" and "doggie" and "cookie" because these are important to them, and they need to be able to name them to "own" them. They learn to say, "Up, Mommy!" because they want and need to be picked up. Their language enables them to fit into their world and control it to some extent. The whole language approach builds on the way language emerges naturally in the child, and on the motivation that the need to make meaning provides. What a powerful motivator the need to make meaning — the need to understand and be understood — is for the emerging language learner!

People Learn to Write by Writing

In whole language, and in the process approach to writing described in this *Guidebook*, the language user or learner must be an active participant in the process. Young children learn to talk by talking, not by completing grammar exercises. It stands to reason (and research is showing us that reason and reality are going hand-in-hand here) then, that people learn to write by writing. In a process approach, we need to provide an environment in which learners can write, and in which the need to make meaning and sense energizes and directs the process. Making meaning must be the primary goal in this environment; making meaning must be the primary function of the writing. Because the process approach requires such active participation on the part of the student, the traditional student-teacher "balance of power" changes. The student writer becomes much more in charge and control of the process. The teacher provides the road map and directional signs, but the student drives the process to his or her final draft or destination.

In a traditional writing classroom, the teacher may provide very specific assignments in which the student merely follows the teacher's directions and fills in a blank or completes a sentence about something that has no personal relevance. The teacher is in charge; and the student is relatively powerless and uninvolved. In the writing environments we hope to encourage, students are writing and revising original work on topics that are important to them, and sharing comments and suggestions with peers. Teachers offer suggestions and encouragement, ask focusing questions, but the primary "ownership" of the work must be with the student. It may be unsettling at first to give up this control, but think how exhilarating it is when we can empower our students with the tools and confidence they need to use language independently and successfully!

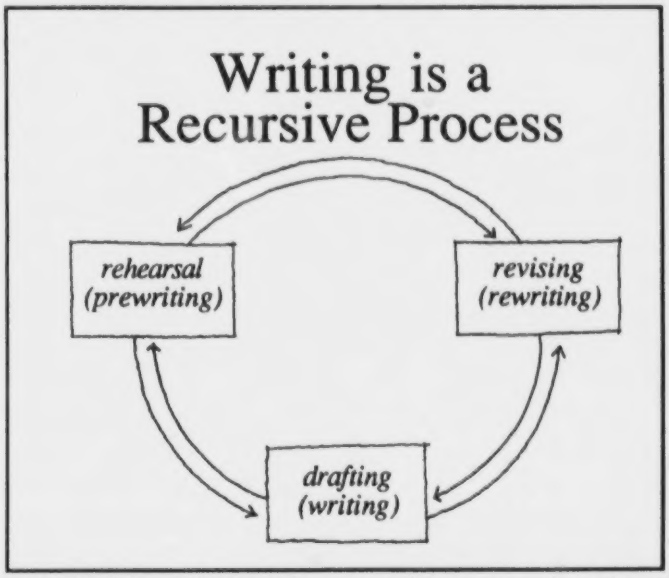
While people learn to write by writing, we need to provide environments and opportunities in which students can write the way successful, experienced writers do: through reworking, revising, rethinking, and polishing until, finally, they produce their "best effort." A powerful — and frustrating — aspect of writing is that it is *not* "talk written down." That means that

our first, tentative efforts at writing can be private, and we can manipulate our ideas and words until we're satisfied with our products and wish to share them with an outside audience. Donald Graves refers to the "itch," the difference between what we intended and what we've actually written. This difference motivates practiced writers to revise a first effort or draft until it says what they want. But this difference between intention and product can cripple beginning writers unless they realize that writing happens in stages, and that good writing involves a process of changing and reworking. Beginning writers need to know that the "first pass" is rarely one's best effort, and that it's all right for this first pass to be imprecise and imperfect. The environment we create as teachers must allow and value both these fledgling efforts and the long, hard journey students will undertake to produce their best effort.

The Writing Process

What is the process, then, of getting to the best effort? How do writers write? What do writers do when they write? We can think of the writing process as having three general stages: prewriting or rehearsing, writing or drafting, and revising.

Prewriting is the stage at which the writer "primes the pump" for writing — coming up with ideas, topics, thoughts, points of view. Rehearsing, incubating, simmering are some of the ways skilled writers describe the mental activity which prewriting involves. In the whole language approach which the writing process assumes, writers write within a meaningful context, so their life experiences become a very important, valid part of prewriting. As teachers, we need to provide a rich environment and activities to encourage prewriting so that student writers come to the computer or their writing notebook with a "head full of ideas."



In writing or drafting, the writer records some of his or her "head full of ideas" into printed words. Experienced writers let their ideas and words tumble onto the page without worrying about format and grammar, knowing they can come back later to revise and edit, to shuffle the pieces around until they fit. Student writers, too, who approach writing as a process, concentrate first on making meaning in their writing. They can approach the blank page or screen without terror, knowing that they can work on their pieces until they're satisfied. Questions about spelling and grammar conventions, for example, can be put on the "back burner" so students can concentrate first on content. This is especially important for children and for limited English proficient adults, who may approach the writing task with trepidation because they know their command of English conventions or handwriting or typing skills is weak. These writers, of course, are the very ones who need most the opportunity to practice writing and rewriting in order to improve their competence and confidence as writers.

We can think of revision as re-vision, or seeing again. This stage of the writing process may be the most unfamiliar to those of us who learned "writing" as a series of grammar and spelling exercises, and "rewriting" as copying over in our best handwriting. Instead, revision allows the writer to look again at a rough draft, and add or take out information, rearrange the pieces, change the point of view, the approach, the message. Once the writer is satisfied with what the written piece is saying, he or she can proofread and copy edit it — correcting grammatical errors and misspellings. Revision is a very powerful process and tool because not only do writers create and improve their product, they gain an awareness of some power and control over their language and their world.

These stages — prewriting, writing, and revising — are not three distinct, linear steps, but make up a recursive process in which the stages flow into and interact with each other. Writers are constantly going back and forth between prewriting, writing, and revising. As a writer begins to record some ideas that seem to fit together (writing), or thinks about how to change something in a draft (revising), she may come up with an idea to pursue later (prewriting). As a writer drafts "chapter two" of his book (writing), rearranging the sequence of events in "chapter one" may become necessary (revising).

Imagine the writer as a juggler, with three balls — one each for prewriting, writing, and revising. As a beginner, the juggler may practice with any one ball, but still know that "real" juggling, like "real" writing, involves all three, moving and flowing into each other. And picture those marvelous fireworks where a central ball of fire (think of our writing process diagram as this ball of fire!) explodes outward with many multi-colored spokes. As the audience finishes its first long "ahh-hh-hh!!!" the end of each spoke explodes into another fireball, filling the air with dozens of the dazzling spheres.

The writing process can capture that same fluid, dynamic excitement and energy if we create the right teaching and learning environment. The rest of this *Guidebook* provides strategies, activities, and suggestions to make this happen.

Let the fireworks begin!

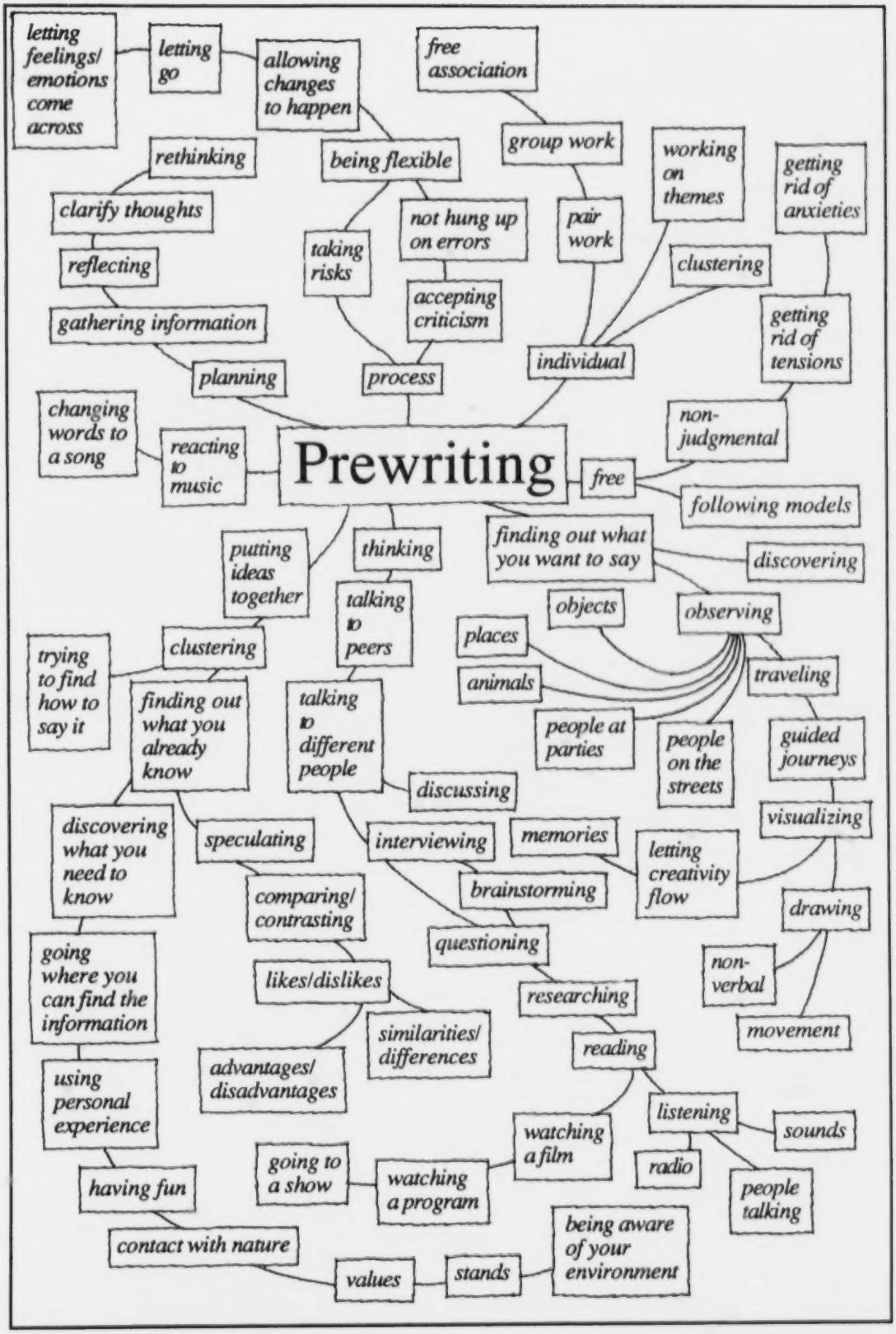
SECTION III:

Prewriting

SUMMARY:

1. Provide a non-threatening classroom environment, conducive to prewriting activities.
2. Decide on prewriting strategies that are most beneficial to your students.
3. Arrange for prewriting events: interviewing family and school personnel, hearing stories, reading self-selected materials, going on field trips, participating in group discussions, etc.
4. Provide opportunities for students to interact and to discuss informally with one another their ideas and their plans as they begin to write.
5. Lead the class in brainstorming sessions on announced topics during which all contributions are listed.
6. Assess the effects of prewriting activities

REMINDER: *We often ask students to write too soon. Don't rush into writing. Remember that other forms of language learning are taking place during prewriting activities (listening, reading, asking and answering questions, etc.)*



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There is an activity I have often used with my students that you might want to try. It goes like this:

Sit with your students in a circle.

Ask each person to put a personal object in the middle of the circle. This object must represent their expectations towards what they want to do in class, towards what they want to learn, or towards your role as a teacher. You'll do the same but you'll tell them what you'd like them to learn, what you'd like your role to be, and how you'll behave as the teacher.

The following are answers I've received when we did this activity:

Teacher: This is an empty notebook. [I've also used a newsletter one of my classes had put together, a bunch of letters my students had written to students in another city, or other objects relevant to what I wanted to say.] We'll be doing a lot of writing this year. I think writing can be a lot of fun and I'd like you to try new ways of writing. I'm going to help you.

Student B: I put my sneakers in the middle of the circle because I don't like to be inside all the time — I like to run.

Student A: I put my pen in because I want to write. But I make lots of mistakes when I write. I don't want people to laugh at me when I make a mistake. I want to play too and I want the teacher to do fun things.

This goes on until all students have said something. The teacher asks questions, clarifies, encourages interchanges between students . This activity helps you to get a sense of where your students are coming from and where they are going. Some students will tell you they don't like — or even hate — writing. Some will say they don't like homework or school. Be non-judgmental and listen carefully to what they are saying. The key to this activity is to create a climate of trust where students can tell you and others how they really feel without fear of being reprimanded or corrected. That will give you an idea of what attitudes you must work on even before you start thinking about writing.

Now maybe it's time to set some rules.

Start from what students have already said and encourage them to participate in decisions concerning writing activities. They'll be using the computer, so tell them what the rules for computer use are. Enlist their help to draw up a list of **do's** and **don't's**. Show them a schedule organizer for computer use and explain what they must do. If there's going to be a table near the computer for students to read their pieces to each other, tell them so. If they are going to be working in pairs at the computer, clarify how this is going to be done. Do the two students write one story or two stories? Do they take turns keyboarding? Remember that all this is very new to your students and unless you tell them, they won't know what to do.

You must be thinking: "But this takes so much time..."

You're right, it does. But you are already brainstorming with them, they're working in a group, they are interacting with each other and listening to one another. In addition, as they learn what they'll be doing, what their roles are going to be and what your role will be, their level of anxiety decreases and they can learn more. Think of yourself as a facilitator, as someone who will help them manage *their* writing process.

Prewriting Activities

We often ask our students to write too soon, to write before they have a sense of what it is that they want to say. **Prewriting** activities aim at producing a "head full of ideas," exactly what I had when I started writing this chapter.

Remember that while you're doing **prewriting** activities, there are many forms of language learning taking place. Students are listening to you and to others; they are answering your questions and their classmates' questions; they are talking to each other; they are expressing feelings and emotions; they are using their cognitive skills to guess, compare, separate facts from opinions. We have listed several **prewriting** activities that you might want to try.

1. GUESS WHO

Ask your students to write the following about themselves:

- two physical characteristics
- two adjectives describing their personality
- two things about themselves that the class doesn't know.

(You do the same)

Collect all pieces of paper and distribute them to the class. Each person reads and tries to guess who the writer is.

Tell students that they can write as much as they want about themselves. They can make it easy or difficult for others to guess.

2. COLLAGES

Collages are great for generating ideas and conversation. Bring in old magazines and butcher paper. Have students work in small groups cutting and pasting. Each group selects a theme, for example:

- things I like/I don't like
- family
- how I feel today.

After they've done the collage, they can talk about it.

3. ROTATION

This activity is usually used in group dynamics and drama classes or workshops. Students line up in two parallel lines facing each other:

A A A A A A A

B B B B B B B

They start a conversation. At your signal, B's move to the right and a conversation is started with the new partner. Another way of setting up a rotation is by having an inner and an outer

circle format where one of the circles moves. Everyone will talk at the same time while you monitor. It has been noted that this activity is especially appropriate for second language learners. "Protected" by the noise, they become less afraid of making errors and are more apt to experiment with language.

4. USING THE SENSES

When giving practice in the use of the senses, says Brian May in *Development Through Drama,* we are "helping each human being become a fully sensitive instrument, aware of itself, aware of its immediate and ever changing environment, and sensitive to the larger whole containing the smaller."

You can try several simple exercises, such as the following:

- Put unusual objects inside a large paper bag. Have students reach for an object, feel it, and without taking it out of the bag describe it to others and try to figure out what it is.
- Have students close their eyes and try to identify source of sounds (tapping a pencil, tearing or crumpling paper, etc.)
- Bring art to the class. Bring a reproduction or photo (or postcard) of a painting(s) and explore how your students feel about its color, how it makes them feel, what they like/dislike about it, etc.

5. OBSERVATION

Ask students to observe with purpose. Start with them observing you and noticing how you walk, sit; your gestures, mannerisms. Have them observe each other. What can they say about each other as a result of this observation? Give each student the task of observing someone and then coming to class and describing the results of these observations. Help them by providing a framework for this task:

- You are at the bus stop (or on the train, or waiting at a dentist's office, for example). Pick a person to observe. Describe the person. Can you tell the age? How is this person dressed? Is he/she impatient? Does she/he seem in a hurry? Happy? Unhappy? Why do you say this?

6. FINDAWORD

Write a "word" on the board. **Supercalifragilistcexpialodotious**, for example. Have students work in small groups and write as many words as they can using the letters from that word. Explain rules: words must be "real" and letters cannot be repeated more often than they are in "your" word. For example, there are only three "a's" in the above word.

7. BRAINSTORMING

When you brainstorm, you (or a group) generate ideas to solve a problem. Brainstorming involves suspending judgment for a period of time. We don't ask "Will this work?" or "Is it practical?" First, list as many ideas as possible in a given period of time. A second step is to go back to the ideas and discard or modify the ones the group finds less appropriate. Brainstorming is used in management (and called Value Analysis) in order to discover more efficient ways of doing things. You may want to try **brainstorming** with your students. For example, you can say:

- "We went on a field trip and got lost in the woods. We may not be found before morning. It's cold and dark. What are the things that you may have with you to help us spend the night? What may help us find our way back?"
- You can link these activities to their curriculum. For example, if they are learning about natural habitats you may, after a lesson on the desert or the jungle, give students a list of objects they could have if they were lost. Ask them to come up with as many ways as possible to use these objects and anything else they might find in the environment to survive and get to safety.

Now that you have an idea of what kinds of activities will help your students have a "head full of ideas," let's turn to a controversial area, indeed: Choosing Topics for Writing.

Designing Writing Assignments / Choosing Topics for Writing

The most often asked questions related to the choice of writing topics are: Do I choose the topic or do students choose their topics? What if they're not interested in the topic I choose? What if I let them choose their own topics and they tell me there's nothing they want to write about? Suppose I let them choose and they always choose topics that are not "right" (too broad, too easy, too complicated)?

Teachers have been asking these and many other questions whenever the subject of topics for student writing is mentioned. Frankly, I don't know *the* answer. When I write, it is because I have the need to communicate — letters to friends and relatives, short stories, little vignettes that help me discover how I feel and are based on my day-to-day experiences. But, I must frequently write work related materials — proposals, reports, articles. These are birds of different feathers. They are not personal, but they draw on work related experience. They are much more formal in tone and aim at convincing people that I can do (or have done) A, B, or C for them. One thread runs through all this writing: It has a purpose. It's done as a means to achieve an end. Good writing is effective. It makes people laugh or cry; it angers people or helps them understand; it convinces or explains.

The question of interest, then, becomes, **"What kinds of assignments can I give my students so that I will replicate as best as I can conditions for writing as they occur in the world outside of the classroom?"** To me that question is usually linked to purpose. There must be a reason to write other than for the teacher or for a grade. If there is no purpose for the task, thinking about topics won't help. Here are some things to remember when considering topics for writing.

1. GIVE TOPICS THAT DRAW ON STUDENTS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

When asked to write on topics based on personal experience, writers are asked to be reflective and draw conclusions based on what they have experienced. Writers don't write about topics of which they know little. Very often we read about how writers, journalists, actors, and actresses felt the need to experience something in order to write about it or in order to understand a character in a play or a movie. A journalist spent three days in the streets of Boston in order to write about the homeless; another spent time in jail in order to write about life in

prison; a Vietnam veteran directed a movie about the Vietnam war that is considered the only realistic movie made about the subject.

Obviously, we are not suggesting that our students engage in perilous activities in order to write. But the question we must ask ourselves is, "What knowledge of this situation must students have so that they can write about it?"

In one of the schools involved in our writing project, students are writing to find out how school works. They have interviewed teachers, administrators, support staff, janitors, bus drivers, and other students; they have conducted a survey to determine how people perceive the quality of the services offered — cafeteria, library. Of course, before any writing was attempted we brainstormed, we generated questions to ask the interviewees, we established procedures to make appointments for interviews, and we talked about what the end product would look like.

The result of this project was an understanding of a complex system, how the different roles complement each other, and how the various players interact with one another. In addition, students learned a process for inquiry. This was a typical example of writing to learn (rather than learning to write).

2. CLARIFY THE PURPOSE OF WRITING or WHY WRITE?

It is essential that we be clear on what exactly we want student to do. Writing is difficult enough without the added difficulty of a student having to guess what the teacher wants. For example, Mother's Day is approaching and you assign the topic "My mother." This is too vague, too broad, and too difficult for students to tackle. A better assignment would be:

- Write a letter (format) to your mother (audience). In your letter, say five nice things that your mother has done for you in the past year (for more advanced students you may add "and explain why you think these were nice things"). Also write one or two things that you don't think were so nice (again, more advanced students may be asked to explain why).

The above assignment explicitly details work to be done. You may want to add length of the assignment and the time allowed to complete the assignment.

Traditionally, students have been asked to write so that the teacher can check their use of grammar or command of words. Although form is a worthy consideration and certainly must be learned, the way we approach writing in this *Guidebook* is to focus on content rather than form.

We write to communicate or share our thoughts, feelings, ideas, and opinions with others: letters, postcards, narratives, stories, reports, newsletters. We also write to discover more about ourselves and our environment: journals, interviews, travel logs. Mechanics, grammar, and vocabulary can be taught and learned in many different ways. In order to learn how to write, students must write often and must receive feedback on their writing.

3. LET STUDENTS KNOW WHAT THE END PRODUCT IS GOING TO LOOK LIKE

I keep a copy of most things I have written: books, articles, reports, proposals, stories, some letters. Because I witnessed their cloudy beginnings and struggled through the process of making them look better, once they are finished I'm very pleased to see how good they look.

If what your students have written looks good and is their best effort, they will be proud of it. They will be especially proud if their writing is in a format that looks professional: a log book, a newsletter, a collection of letters (with responses) they have written to someone, a family history, a set of interviews. The more professional it looks (with illustrations, cover, table of contents, etc.) the more important it will become. If it appears to be just another school assignment, students won't see it as important. Therefore, a considerable amount of effort should be spent on figuring out what your students' product will look like.

Every time I write a book, a proposal, a report, I spend a great deal of time talking to someone about what it should look like. Sometimes it is an editor. Sometimes a co-worker. Sometimes a colleague. Typical questions are: "How many pages?" "Are there illustrations?" "What size page are we talking about?" "Do we need a cover?" "What's the cover going to look like?"

4. CLARIFY AND DISCUSS THE ASSIGNMENTS

Provide time for students to clarify any doubts they have about the assignment and also negotiate with you possible variations that they find more interesting. Listen to your students, they will have good ideas for different assignments. You can keep a record of these ideas to use in future projects.

5. HELP STUDENTS CHOOSE THEIR OWN TOPICS

Needless to say, there is no better way for students to establish ownership and pride in what they write than if they are able to make decisions regarding their writing. That isn't to say that "anything goes," but that the decision about the "how's" and the "what's" of the writing projects should be reached jointly by you and your students. In addition, research shows that writers who learn how to choose topics well make the most significant growth in information and skills.

However, topics for writing are linked to the curriculum. As students learn more in school, their choice of topics should reflect their growing capabilities. We don't want students to be writing on the same topics year after year. We don't want students to choose topic A just because it won't require any effort on their part. I think of it the way I think about my skiing. Given the choice, I'd stay on the bunny slopes where I'm most comfortable. On a beginner slope I can ski with grace and dignity and anyone who watches me will take me for a ski instructor. Because I ski with friends who are accomplished skiers, I end up on slopes where I'm not so comfortable, not so graceful. I fall, I struggle...but I learn and improve.

I particularly like writing projects that involve the whole class. I find that writing instruction is easier to manage if you're able to involve all students in one project that has a purpose understood by all. An example is the "How school works" writing project I mentioned earlier. In Lawrence, Massachusetts, a group of gifted LEP students are publishing a newsletter; In another Lawrence school students are writing a "Book of Stories." I think that a writing project involving many students will give your writing program a sharper focus. In addition, we will be able to engage different students in activities most appropriate to their talents. Other examples of writing projects include:

- a log book where newspaper clippings about a theme chosen by the class are tied together by pieces written by various students;
- a family history book where students' families are seen in their historic perspective.

If you choose to have students write individual assignments, however, remember that choosing a topic is easier for some students than for others. You may want to have some students

write about topics they are interested in and assign topics to those who say they don't know what to write about.

6. CREATE A STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT

Writing done by the students shouldn't be shelved and forgotten inside a writing folder. Post students' writings, drawings, collages, or pictures. If the school has a newspaper, select pieces written by your students to be published. Have a "writing fair" where work is displayed. Don't forget to include your own writing.

7. SHARE YOUR OWN WRITING

It makes no sense to insist that writing is important for students when you don't do any writing. Students should be able to see your writing as it develops, not as a finished product. They see enough finished products in the textbooks they use. Students will feel more comfortable about their own writing behavior when they realize that *all* writers struggle (even the teacher!) As the writing teacher you must model good writing practices.

In one of the groups I was working with last year, junior high students were writing stories about their favorite person. I had recently returned from California where I had visited a friend, the grumpiest person I know. Upon returning, I wrote a tongue-in-cheek vignette to send to this friend. I made a copy of the first draft and showed it to the students in the group. Some laughed; some thought I was being too critical and and wondered whether my friend's feelings would be hurt. Others were of the opinion that "you write things the way they are" and if my friend was this grumpy, he deserved the criticism.

In the process of doing this, we talked about their own feelings and how *they* were approaching their writing pieces. After seeing what I had written, some students became bolder and experimented with humor. They all saw writing "in progress" and saw me as the struggling writer that I am, instead of as someone who can sit down and dash off a perfect piece the first try.

I had valuable feedback to use in rewriting. Some of the humor was not easily understood and I crossed those sentences out. I softened one sentence that was considered "too strong." I made some other changes based on our talk. We all learned as a result of this discussion.

What is a planner?

Some software programs designed for students have an environment that functions as an advance organizer — it helps students organize their ideas before they attempt a first draft. In QUILL, this environment is called the Planner; in Fredwriter, it is called a Prompt File. Other software packages will have different names for it. Their function is the same.

Let's assume that you have conducted various prewriting activities designed to fill your students' heads with ideas. You have conducted class discussions; you have reviewed vocabulary; students have come to the point where they are confident enough to write. Let's assume that you have — with the help of the group — selected a writing topic or a writing project. Now the time has come to prepare a planner.

A planner is used to stimulate ideas, to give students focus and purpose. For example, in the "how school works" assignment, the planner would be the interview forms to be used with

various interviewees. The planner might also include reminders, do's and don't's when conducting an interview. The planner would guide students through the process of conducting and writing up an interview.

In the case of the family history assignment, the planner might include a family tree to remind students of who they must talk to in the family; it might include a list of prompts designed to make sure that all information relevant to the project is collected. For example, we might want to know who the student is interviewing, when this person came to the U.S., reasons for coming, expectations, difficulties faced, etc. All this would be part of the planner.

In the case of the log book project, we may want to give precise instructions on:

- how to tackle the project (collect from newspapers articles on X);
- theme and sub-themes (X is the big umbrella, sub-themes are ___);
- instructions (once you've selected your sub-theme, write your name next to it on this planner);
- deadlines and time constraints (I need to know who is going to write about what by ___); and
- procedures (you may work individually or in pairs).

The important thing to remember is that we are not writing guided compositions. Therefore, a planner cannot be prepared before conducting prewriting activities. To do so would be to assume that you know the direction your students' thoughts will take. Teachers may be jugglers and magicians. Mind readers they are not. The planner is the result of prewriting activities. It eases the way from one stage to another by helping students to remain focused on their assignments.

SECTION IV:

Writing

SUMMARY:

1. After some prewriting activity, ask students to jot down ideas without the pressure of writing complete sentences.
2. After they have jotted down ideas or have used a Planner (QUILL) or a prompt file (Fredwriter), have them write their first draft at the computer.
3. Ask students to write as much as they can about a given topic (chosen by them or by you) without worrying about errors.
4. Teach grammar, usage, and mechanics in relationship to the students' current writing problems.
5. **Keep everything your writing students do during the year in a folder!**

REMINDER: *When students sit at the computer to write, it's preferable that they have a few ideas down, or have already talked to others about what they are going to write; having students transcribe what they have written previously is time consuming because of their lack of typing skills.*

After thinking, talking, reading, brainstorming, and experimenting with ideas, a time came when I was ready to sit at the computer and commit myself to composing a first draft of this *Guidebook*. Because I had prepared well and I am sufficiently experienced with the many dimensions of written English, my first draft almost wrote itself. As I wrote, I reflected that helping students reach this point is the role of writing instruction.

The writing stage needs to be viewed in two different ways. Seen in one way, it is the flowing of words onto the page, easily, naturally, rapidly. But it is also the time for making decisions, choosing what to tell and what to leave out, thinking about who is speaking and who is listening, determining what order, what structure, what word works best. While working on the **prewriting** section, for example, after having written four paragraphs describing an experience I had had with some students while prewriting, I sat back, read it over and thought to myself, "No, that's too much. It'll bore the reader," and I scratched it off. Even though I thought the experience had been valuable to me, I felt that it was too detailed, occupied too much page space, or needed to be more to the point if I wanted it to be effective.

Writing is much more than the exercise of a series of previously learned, previously practiced subskills. Writing involves exploring, discovering, planning, remembering, choosing, ordering, organizing, spelling, and the physical act of writing, all at once. Providing the student with guidance in the **prewriting** phase and helping the student writer coordinate all these different activities is the essence of writing instruction.

The bridge between the **prewriting** and **writing** could be the Planner or Prompt file. The Planner can be thought of as stream-of-thought writing. When students work with the Planner, they do not necessarily have to write detailed answers to questions. They may very well be recording in writing thoughts suggested by the topic as these thoughts go through their minds. They may use words, phrases, dashes to record these ideas. The result is a record of thought — chaotic or orderly, simple or elaborate. Students write these records primarily for themselves as a springboard for composing a first draft.

Problem Solving In Writing

Writers must make many choices as they commit words to paper. The primary means of learning how to make the best decisions seem to be continued writing experiences closely examined by sensitive respondents. Some of the problems that must be solved as one writes include:

1. VOICE

At this point I cannot resist sharing with you my "voice" experience. The first book I wrote, I was the lowly co-author of a well known author who had, until that date sold close to ten million copies of books. Obviously my voice had to be his voice and I remember staying awake at night doubting my ability to write the next unit. Slowly, as I matured as a writer, I started to hear a tiny, weak voice that seemed to come from inside me rather than from the outside. In time, that tiny, little voice became stronger and demanded to be heard. After a period of confusion about whose voice it was, a day came when I wrote a book that had my own voice and I don't remember any lost sleep over whether I'd be able to write the next page.

Students become sensitized to voice when they are asked to write various pieces that require them to fill one of the many roles they play in life. Are students writing to mother on Mother's Day? Are they writing a letter of complaint that requires an angry voice? Are they trying to

persuade someone to do things their way? Are they writing a respectful letter to the principal or an informal letter to a dear friend? Only when writers become aware of all these choices can they clearly establish their own voice for a particular piece of writing.

2. AUDIENCE

In considering their audiences, writers need to know a few things:

- Who is the reader?
- How much does the reader know about the subject?
- How ready is the reader to receive this "message?"
- What help does the reader need?

The audience for any writing activity should be designated as part of the assignment. As students read their papers to themselves, classmates, or small groups, these questions about audience must be answered.

3. PURPOSE

There are many possible purposes to writing — to inform, to persuade, to upset, to confirm, to record and to entertain, among others. The purpose selected remains another controlling factor in the way a written piece will be developed. An informational piece relies heavily on facts while a persuasive piece will highlight the points most decisive in reaching the desired effect. Writers must experiment with different purposes and the ways in which purpose affects writing so that they learn to make choices when working in the **writing** stage. As with audience, purpose usually is part of the writing assignment.

4. FORM

Decisions about **voice, audience,** and **purpose,** coupled with a clear sense of content, lead to the **form** in which the written piece will be delivered. Students must experiment with different forms of writing such as:

- Biographical sketches
- Sketches of other people
- Stories (from experience or told by others; real or fictional)
- Letters (personal, public, informational, persuasive)
- Commentaries
- Dialogues and conversations
- School newspaper stories and "fillers"
- Fact books and fact sheets
- **Etc., etc., etc.**

5. MAKING CHOICES OF CONTENT

Once student writers have built a full body of content in the prewriting stage by clustering, discussing, mapping, and so on, they must choose from this content as they set out to write. For easy student use, we suggest strategic questioning, a simple four-part classification of

questions based on Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive levels and Joy Guilford's *The Nature of Human Intelligence*. The question types are exemplified with questions about the topic "My Winter Vacation". Let's assume that the student has chosen to write about a skiing trip taken during this time. The four questions will be:

1. A question asking for a recall of the facts about the event (the situation, place, or person one is writing about). What special skills did this trip require?
2. A question requiring the use of facts to prove a point or support a generalization. What did you discover about yourself on this trip that you hadn't known before?
3. A question that causes the writer to use a known fact as a starting point to move in various directions. How is the place you visited on this trip different (or like) someplace else you've known?
4. A question that uses the information developed to reach some sort of judgment. What did you like best about this trip? What did you like least?

Students need much experience in applying these kinds of questions. Class discussion about a common writing assignment may result in questions that would be utilized both by the writer and the peer editing groups when reading the drafts.

If the **prewriting** activities are successful, then student writers will have plenty to write about, so that the frustration of having nothing to say should be minimized.

However, when dealing with second language learners, we must remember that developing the students' sense of confidence in their ability to use written English is essential. Without such confidence, the task of putting the first words on paper may look insurmountable. Early emphasis on form over content, correcting papers before the writer has had an opportunity to receive constructive feedback, a preoccupation with surface errors at an early stage of the writing process, all may signal to the student writers — especially those whose native language is not English — that writing is a task well beyond their abilities.

Summing up, after a rich set of successful **prewriting** experiences have taken place, the objective of this first-draft stage is the production of a readable *rough* draft which responds to the assignment and which can be used (a) for response from readers, (b) for the writer's rethinking of the paper, (c) for revision and editing. Only then should it be used by the teacher to assess a student's writing skills.

SECTION V:

Rewriting

SUMMARY:

1. Provide plenty of opportunities for students to rework writing pieces done earlier in the year.
2. Have students read their pieces to themselves after they finish the first draft (or get a printout).
3. Pair students and have them read to each other as they finish their first draft.
4. Arrange small response groups of three to five students. Encourage students to share their work by reading aloud to the group. In this way, they will receive immediate reaction early in the process.
5. Provide questions for guidance as students read their own or react to classmates' writing.
6. Establish a schedule of individual consultations with students regarding their writing.
7. Provide students with specific suggestions for improvement.

REMINDER: *It takes time and effort to set up these routines. Don't expect students to catch on immediately. Remember, however, that once they do, your job will be greatly facilitated. Trust us. We've seen it happen!*

Rewriting is what happens to a paper after the first initial rough draft has been done. Rewriting includes at least two stages: (a) revision, which involves reorganizing, adding, or cutting text, changing tone and vocabulary; and (b) proofreading, or correcting errors of punctuation, spelling, and grammar. If students are to improve their writing skills, it is necessary to differentiate the functions of revision and proofreading at the rewriting stage.

After motivation and prewriting, after the first rough draft is written, the next step in the writing process is for students to revise and edit. Not that we are recommending going through the process of writing a paper in a lockstep fashion — planning into composing into rewriting — but one must have a rough draft before one rewrites in the same manner that before one commits words to paper, a series of prewriting activities must have taken place. Because writing is a recursive process, writers will keep going back to the preceding stages of the process. They will perhaps add more information suggested by the prewriting activities if, when they read their first rough draft, they find that gaps exist or ideas have not been adequately developed. Writers might cut parts of the text if their readers find that the text rambles; they might ask themselves if they are saying what they intended.

Revision has incorrectly been thought of in terms of recopying an assignment neatly, or of correcting grammar, punctuation, and spelling. If, by revision, we mean catching errors and nothing more, the student will be denied a chance to effectively participate in the process of writing.

Revision, in the words of the most distinguished researchers in the area of writing (Graves, Murray, Moffett, Emig, to name a few), means "seeing again." Revision and rewriting, when properly done and when regarded as a normal part of the process of writing, can serve to improve a piece of writing and should not be viewed as punishment or as the price a student has to pay for handing in an unacceptable first draft.

Revision can be a motivating force for students if they are given the opportunity to experience the adventure of rewriting. In order for students to do so, we must organize activities which will teach the process of revision effectively. The teacher needs to lead students through the problems uncovered in their written work and provide them with the means to solve the problems. Nold has done extensive research in revision and its problem-solving aspects. If writers do not see the problems in their writing or if when the problem is diagnosed they cannot think of better solutions than the ones they have already put forth, then they will not revise. Teachers need to help students discover which revision activities will solve which problems and then assist students in applying the skills necessary in these activities.

Rewriting Activities

1. WRITER AS A READER

Writers read their own papers silently to themselves as they are producing their first drafts. But because they are the authors and have in mind precisely what they wish to say, they may gloss over obvious omissions or places where grammar can be improved. So at the end of the draft, they must put on their "reader's hat" for a while and learn to read their own papers aloud as if they were seeing them for the first time. They can read their work to a partner or a friend, or have a partner read it aloud to them.

As students hear their own papers read aloud, they are more able to discern problems in syntax, organization, omission. Students must realize that if *they* have trouble reading what they have written, they cannot expect another reader to read it easily. I have sat by students who were reading their paper aloud and have seen them stop, stumble, and then say, "No, this is not right . . . ." That is how "seeing again" begins. Reading aloud is the first step after a draft is complete. It is a productive activity both for both improving content (Does it really say what you mean?) and catching obvious surface level errors (word omissions, typographical errors, subject-verb agreement, etc.) Even though we urge proofreading at the end, as a final step before publishing, the oral readback is the perfect opportunity for students to catch their own surface level errors and make the corrections at that time.

2. PEER EDITING / RESPONSE GROUPS

Student editing groups can be the most effective revision strategy used in a classroom. When students write and know their peers will read, listen to, and respond to their writing, they know they are writing for an audience. Students no longer feel that they are writing papers that will only be corrected and read by the teacher.

During peer editing/response group sessions, writers see the effect of their work and experience what it is like to be in a writer-reader type of relationship. The editors benefit as well, because as they read, diagnose, and help solve the writing problems of others, they develop similar skills for improving their own writing.

In one of the classrooms I visited regularly as part of our writing project, I watched three fourth-graders working in a peer editing group. One student read the piece he had written describing a visit to Plymouth. The piece went somewhat like this: ". . . we arrived at 9 o'clock. Then we went to see Plymouth Rock. Then we went to see the ship. Then we had lunch. Then . . ." At this point he was interrupted by one of the "editors." "Wait!" she said. "There are too many 'then's.'" The writer looked uncertain and replied, "What do I do?" There was a pause. Then suggestions started to come from the members of the group. "Cross out a 'then' and write an 'and,'" said one. "Begin your sentence with 'After lunch . . .,'" said the other. I marveled as I saw this happening in front of my eyes and took a minute to reflect on the hard work done by the teacher over the weeks and months — for it takes time to teach students revision strategies.

As students become more sophisticated "editors" and the sharing of text is made simpler by the printer capability of the computer, peer sharing and evaluation offers each student the opportunity to observe how his or her writing affects the others. For example, writers can use the word processor to collect readers' comments — the most powerful guide to revising.

The **addition, automatic insert,** and **recopy** features let readers make comments directly on a text they are reading. Being able to write comments in the body of the text saves readers time and provides writers with focused editing comments. In *Writing and Computers,* Daiute gives the following example:

Eleven year old Minca wrote the following short autobiography on the computer and asked 11 year old Allen for comments. Allen made the following comments (in capital letters):

> Hi, my name is Minca. NICE NAME. I'm a girl. I'm sort of plump and my face, I think, is pretty. I like to write. SO DO I. I have a brother and a sister. My mother and father aren't divorced. My sister was born to my mother she YOUR SISTER??? was married to another man. So I don't look like my sister even if I'm supposed to. My brother was born when I was, TWIN? but he still doesn't look like anybody SMALL "E" Except me. Oh, I forgot to tell you. I also like to read. SO DO I. WHAT DO YOU

LIKE TO READ? My name is African and it mean good luck. My bother's name means bravery. My sign is Capricorn. SO IS MINE. My sister's sign is also Capricorn, my brother's sign is Scorpio, my mother's sign is Aquarius and my father's sign is Leo. INTERESTED IN ZODIAC, EH? I'm eleven years old. I use PAST HERE to have a boyfriend, but he moved away. TOO BAD. I'm heartbroken! I'm going to get married anyway, WHEN? but it's still sad. WHAT IS? I hope to see Joseph YOU NEED A COMMA HERE that's his name someday. THE END (BYE-BYE!!!)

Minca evaluated Allen's comments in the context of her writing and made appropriate changes without having to shift between pieces of paper. She laughed at some of the comments and responded to others by making changes. She added details about what she likes to read, deleted some of the references to astrological signs, changed the capital "E" in "Except" to lowercase, and added the phrase beginning with "except" to the previous sentence.

The **delete**, **insert**, and **move** commands of word processors allow writers and editors to prune, expand, and rearrange a text without having to recopy. Thus, the biggest expectation we have of the computer is that it will simplify the revision process.

With or without using the computer for peer editing, the following are suggested ways to establish working and helpful editing groups:

- At the beginning of the year we must establish trust in the classroom; that it's all right for students to read aloud what they have written; that there's a value in each person's ideas; and that comments will be helpful to the writer.
- A demonstration of a peer editing group that includes the teacher should be conducted before the entire class so that questions can be answered and rules clarified.
- Later, ask students to find partners and have each one read to the other what he/she has written. It is possible that during this first attempt, students will choose their friends who may not be able to help them as much as you hope. This, however, may be a necessary first step in the establishment of trust in the classroom. You may want to provide students with questions outside their editing comments. Does it have a beginning and an end? Is it clear what the writer wants to say? Are the sentences too long or confusing? Remember, at this stage we are focusing on organization, clarity, and effectiveness of the writing pieces, not on proofreading.
- The teacher should move around and listen to the different groups, making sure that editing is progressing satisfactorily. You may need to conduct another demonstration (teacher included) of how these peer editing groups should function.

Now it's time for *you* to ask, what if . . .

My students don't want to share their papers with others? This may very well indicate a student's lack of confidence in his or her ability to write. Start small. Have the student share his/her paper with you; share some of your writing with the student and ask for comments.

My students make silly (or no) comments in the editing groups? The questions you provide students with should help them make more helpful comments. Be more specific if necessary. Ask questions such as: Is there a word that is repeated too many times? Are the sentences so long that you can't remember how they started? etc.

My students do not do any editing — they just waste time? Sit with groups that seem not to be doing well. Be part of the group. Model editing behaviors for them. If this doesn't work, change the composition of the group.

After working in an editing group, students are given a chance to change their papers using the feedback provided by their peers. They do so preferably at the computer, print a revised draft, and read their papers aloud once more.

3. TEACHER READING

One more strategy to help students learn how to revise their papers is to read sentences (taken from the second draft) aloud to the class. Students are not told who the author is and are encouraged to present suggestions on how to solve specific problems. Two to three sentences per session should be attempted. The sentences chosen should be representative of the range of errors made by students.

4. TEACHER CONFERENCES

The students and the teacher should have an opportunity to talk about a work in progress. Because effective conferences are essential to the success of your writing program, we've devoted an entire section (Section VI: "Guiding the Writing Conference") to the topic.

5. OUTSIDE REACTION

After all this has been done, a moment comes when students are "sort of happy" with their written pieces. This is the time for them to take their writing to someone other than the teacher or their peers to be read and commented on. These outside readers can be their parents, brothers, sisters, or neighbors. You may, for example, arrange with a high school student to come to class and be the outside reader.

6. PROOFREADING

Proofreading is the job of "cleaning up" the paper and eliminating surface errors. The need for proofreading should not be ignored but should be the final step in the process of revision. Again, you may need to demonstrate proofreading behaviors before you expect students to do it correctly. You might also provide them with a "proofreading check list" for each of the conventions (subject/verb agreement, spelling, capitalization, use of commas, etc.) you want them to check. Asking focussed skills questions will help guide students in their efforts to proofread. See "Guiding the Writing Conference" (Section VI) for examples of questions and questioning strategies.

Yes, it's slow. Yes, it takes time and effort. But remember you are laying the foundation for the edifice. You are not expected to teach your students how to write well in one year. But if your efforts have built on preceding efforts of other teachers or are complemented by the students' subsequent teachers, it is reasonable to expect that after being exposed to so many years of effective writing instruction, students will be able to express themselves in writing, if not elegantly, then clearly and effectively.

7. NOW . . . WHAT?

Making the writing public is the best way to show students that writing is indeed important. When a piece is written with the understanding that it will be made public, students will be more interested in improving it. Publishing will make the writing real to students, not just a meaningless exercise. Depending on your interest and the school context in which you find yourself, you may want to try one or more of the following:

- Have a bulletin board with the paper(s) of the month. Papers of the month could be a result of peer nomination or the teacher can choose a paper that shows the most improvement.
- Have a mailbag (or computer data disks) in which papers "travel" from one class/school to the other.
- Put together a class anthology — each member of the class, teacher included, contributes with a piece. Have students illustrate the publication, add a table of contents, a cover, etc.
- Get together with other teachers and organize a writing contest. Remember that if you choose this option, time will have to be spend on conferences with entrants.
- Organize a pen pal club.
- Place a "letters to the teacher" box in a corner. Students should be encouraged to write letters, notes, suggestions, or complaints. You do the same in a "to the students" box. This can also be thought of as a suggestion box, the theme being "how can we make this class more efficient one month, more fun the next month, etc."

SECTION VI:

Guiding the Writing Conference

SUMMARY:

1. The writing conference is where most of the direct or directed teaching occurs in the process approach to writing.
2. The writing conference can be highly personalized and highly personal; we must be particularly sensitive to students' feelings and work from and with their strengths rather than their weaknesses.
3. The writing conference can take many forms: individual student-teacher conference, peer or student-student conference, and shared writing or "author's circle."
4. The kinds of questions we ask, and the way we ask them, are very important determinants to the success or failure of a writing conference. Good opening, following or reflecting, process, and skills questions help students focus their attention and direction appropriately to improve their writing.

REMINDER: *Careful guidance and good questions in the writing conference are vital and help you create "teachable moments" in writing on a regular basis.*

When and how does direct and directed teaching occur in the writing process? Where do the "nuts and bolts" fit? Many teachers ask these questions when learning about the process approach to writing, or any individualized student-centered approach. The writing conference itself is the "heart" of direct or directed teaching and guidance during the writing process. As teachers, we often search and long for the "teachable moment" and value those few times when we find it. By using the writing conference, writing and its teaching become individualized — we can focus on the specific concerns of students when they emerge and when students are most motivated to work on them. In short, we build in and build on the teachable moment. We can go at the speed and in the direction the student wants and needs. While this individualized approach can be valuable for all students, it's especially important within classroom settings for limited English proficient students. All students in the class may not have the same first language, for example. In addition, the degree of fluency in English may vary greatly across students.

Establishing a Safe Atmosphere

In the writing conference, we need to establish a safe atmosphere where the student can trust the teacher and the rest of the class. The personalization of teacher-student interactions, and the individualized nature of the process can be very threatening. Writing, when from personal experience rather than as a fill-in-the-blank exercise, exposes both the writer's life and facility with written language. As teachers, we must realize the potential for abuse as well as for great personal satisfaction in the process. That means that marking a student's paper (even a first draft) with red correction marks around every error is *not* acceptable, nor is making a transparency of a student's paper and enlarging it on the wall for the entire class to criticize. The psychological repercussions are not worth any possible improvement in skills that might come out of the activity — and it's highly unlikely that any improvement would occur anyway. Limited English proficient students often have unrealistically low self-esteem. In addition, adult learners may be particularly sensitive to their perceived and real limitations with the language. We must value and accept our students *where they are*, and build on their strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses.

The Student-Teacher Conference

The writing conference can take many shapes: individual student-teacher conference, peer or student-student conference, and shared writing or "author's circle." We'll focus first on the individual student and teacher writing conference, since that is where most of your directed teaching will occur. Also, students can become comfortable with the conference process, and you can establish an atmosphere of trust and set up conference guidelines to model so that feelings and anxieties will be respected. Teacher and student can sit side by side rather than across the barrier of a desk so that collaboration becomes easier, for example. The student writer should hold his or her paper or be at the keyboard so that ownership remains clear.

While student writers are the "drivers" in the writing process, we as teachers can and should provide some directional signs. We can do this in the writing conference. The kinds of questions we ask, and the way we ask them, are very important determinants to the success or failure of a writing conference and of the writing itself. We should ask open-ended questions, questions that writers must think about in order to answer. Questions with a tacit "yes" or "no" answer involve the student writer only minimally and may be a waste of valuable

conference time. Regardless of the question, we need to *wait* long enough for the student to develop a response. While 5 to 10 seconds without talking may feel uncomfortably long at first, it's necessary if we want students to develop thoughtful answers and to realize that their answers are, in fact, worth waiting for. Remember, good conference questions require active participation and thoughtful answers. Let's give students a chance to think!

In the writing conference, we as teachers are not so much active as reactive — our students must take charge as the active participants and we must react to their cues. So while this *Guidebook* provides some examples of questions, they are just that — examples. Within the writing conferences we each conduct we must listen to the voices of our students — both their written voices *and* what's spoken in the conference. Only then do we know what they need, where they are, and how best to channel the conference into a successful "teachable moment" that enables the students to gain control over their language and their lives.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

Opening questions get the conference started, and encourage students to "own" their writing. The answers brief the teacher on what the writer has done, and where he or she is currently with the piece of writing. Student concerns and problems often emerge through answers to opening questions.

1. How's it going, Tom?
2. Tell me about your piece, Rosa.
3. What are you writing about now, Kim?
4. Where are you now in your draft, Jose?

FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Following questions help the writer (and the conference) keep going, or follow what he or she has written. They reflect or mirror what the writer has said, which can help him or her "see" what's been written, and what to write to follow it. In this example, the following questions are in **bold type**.

Teacher: How's it going?

Student: Not too well. I just can't get started.

Teacher: **You can't get started?**

Student: No, I always have trouble when I try to write what happened. I want to talk about how hard it was to come to this country and find my way around. To even buy a loaf of bread! Everything is so different and I missed my friends and family so much.

Teacher: **You felt lost and lonely when you came here?**

PROCESS QUESTIONS:

Process questions help students focus on the process(es) they're using in their writing, and maintain control over both the process and the product. They help writers think about what they're doing and how they do it.

1. What do you think you'll do next?
2. I see you changed your beginning. It's much more direct now. How did you do that?
3. If you were going to put in some new information here, how would you go about doing it?
4. When you don't know how to spell a word, how do you go about figuring what to do?
5. How do you figure out where one sentence ends and another sentence begins?
6. What will you do with this piece when it's done?
7. What do you intend to do in the next draft?
8. What does your audience need to know that you haven't told them yet?

SKILLS QUESTIONS:

Once students have revised their work with primary attention to content and intent, they will want to edit their work so it follows English conventions. Skills questions provide a springboard for working on specific language and usage skills. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation problems hamper many beginning writers, but often pose additional problems for limited English proficient writers. Skills questions allow students to work on improving their skills within a meaningful context — their own writing. Good skills questions within the writing conference lead to exercises that allow students to focus on specific skills with which they need extra work. Each of the following examples will focus on one type of skills problem — spelling, grammar, or punctuation. During any given writing conference, focus on one or two revision areas, rather than trying to correct every error in the student's writing.

Spelling Skills Questions:

Teacher: Can you read through your piece and underline any words that you think might be misspelled?

Student: (pause) There...I think that's it.

Teacher: Good. Wait, I see a couple more, there in the third line and in the seventh line. (pause) That's it. All right. Now, I'd like you to make a list of all the words you underlined and see which ones you might be able to figure out yourself with the dictionary. Write the correct spelling next to the first spelling. You can ask other people for help, too. When we get together again, we can check all the words and I'll help you with any that you couldn't find. Then you can edit your draft on the computer and we can print your final copy.

Grammar Skills Questions:

Teacher: I know we've talked a lot about linking verbs and making sure they agree with the subject. I see some places where you've done it absolutely right — here, in this sentence: "My mother and I are happy about his new job." "My mother and I" — You've got a plural subject. What's the verb in that sentence?

Student: ...are...

Teacher: Good. Both the subject and the verb are plural in that sentence. You've done it right here. Now, can you read this sentence (pointing) out loud?

Student: The other boys is not so good with homework.

Teacher: Let's look at that. Who are you talking about in that sentence?

Student: Lee and David and some of the others.

Teacher: So is the subject of your sentence singular or plural? Student: Plural.

Teacher: Good. If your subject is plural, your verb must be.....?

Student: Plural.

Teacher: Right! Now, what's the verb in that sentence?

Student: ....Is.....(pause) Wait a minute.... That's not right.... I think it should be "are." Can I change it?

Teacher: Sure. (pause) Will you read your sentence now?

Student: The other boys are not so good with homework.

Teacher: Great! Can you tell me why you changed the sentence that way?

Student: Well, I was talking about a couple of boys, not only one, and so that means a plural subject. And then the verb has to be plural, too, and "is" is just a singular verb. I needed to put "are" instead.

Teacher: Good for you! I think you're really getting it! Now, I'd like you to read through your whole piece carefully. Every time you come to a sentence with one of these linking verbs — am, is, are — draw a line under the verb. Then, go back to each sentence and look at the subject. Draw a wavy line under the subject. Decide whether your subject is singular or plural, and whether you have a singular or plural verb. If any subject and verb *don't* agree, change the sentence so that they do. Then, next time we get together we'll go over the piece together and make sure they're all right so you can print your next draft.

Punctuation Skills Questions:

Teacher: It looks like you've got a lot of information in this piece. Can you read the first two sentences out loud for me?

Student: You need flour, sugar, butter, and eggs to make this cake. It's definitely not a diet cake!

Teacher: Why did you stop there?

Student: Well, it's the end of the sentence and you told me to read the first two sentences.

Teacher: That's right. And when you read them out loud to me, I could tell you had written two sentences. But I can't really tell that from looking at your paper. Do you know why?

Student: Let's see....Oh, I guess I need to put periods in, don't I?

Teacher: Right! Can you put them where you think they belong? (pause) Okay, now how about reading those two sentences again?

Student: You need flour, sugar, butter, and eggs to make this cake. It's definitely not a diet cake!

Teacher: Now there's a period at the end of each sentence. But you seemed pretty excited when you said it's not a diet cake.

Student: Well, it sure isn't! I mean, look at the whole recipe! It's my favorite, but I can only

make it for very special family occasions — and then we don't eat dessert again for days!

Teacher: So it sounds like the 'diet cake' issue is important to you here.

Student: Absolutely!

Teacher: Well, how can you make sure the sentence will carry your excitement or emotion to the audience? They won't be able to hear you, so you'll have to emphasize the sentence some other way.

Student: Would this be a place to use an exclamation point?

Teacher: I think so. Why don't you put one in there? (pause) What other kinds of punctuation marks could come at the end of a sentence? In fact, what kind of punctuation mark would come at the end of the sentence I'm saying now?

Student: A question mark?

Teacher: Right. Now, I'd like you to read your whole piece out loud, but to yourself. Every time you pause because it seems like the end of a sentence, put a little box at the space where you paused. Then, go back over the whole piece again. Look at each box and decide if it does mark the end of a sentence. If it does, put a period, question mark, or exclamation point in the box. When we get together again, we can go over the sentences together and make sure the punctuation is correct. Then you can edit your piece on the computer and print your next draft.

In each of these examples, the student's writing, or where the student is in the writing process, forms the center of the writing instruction and discussion. All instruction radiates from that core, and is conducted in the meaningful context of the student's work. It may seem, initially, that conducting individual conferences takes more time than you have, but once you experience the richness of the learning situation, and find yourself creating "teachable moments" on a regular basis, you'll wonder how you could teach writing without these conferences!

Peer Conferences and "Author's Circle"

Once you and your students are comfortable with the process of the conference, you can expand the type to include peer conferences, in which students discuss each other's work. A peer conference may involve two or more students discussing their work-in-progress, going through prewriting activities to "prime the pump" and get ideas, or working through a structured activity to improve specific skills in a piece of writing. As in any student-student activity, you'll want to select student teams carefully to maximize learning for all and minimize interpersonal stress or tension. Peer conferences can be an excellent way for students to begin working with each other on improving their writing and developing a sense of audience.

The "author's circle" or shared writing is used widely, beginning even with kindergartners or first graders who, familiar with the process approach, have polished a piece sufficiently to want to share it with others to gather suggestions before publishing or finalizing the work. In author's circle, it's important that the student writer be comfortable enough with the product, the process, and the classroom environment to sit with his or her peers and read a piece of personal writing and ask for comments and input. Many teachers establish some ground rules; for example, each member of the audience, realizing that the author considers this a "best effort," must begin with a positive comment. Each suggestion or criticism must be specific, and if possible, offer a way to change the draft. For example: "I don't understand how

each event follows. Could you describe that a little more fully?" or "I like the way you told the beginning, so we could understand what was happening and see what everyone was doing. But I got confused in the middle when they were playing ball. Could you maybe say who was playing ball and what the others were doing instead?" This way, the audience as well as the author can get involved in the process of writing.

All participants in a writing conference — students and teachers alike — should realize that opening one's work to public scrutiny *is* a big step. Being party to this opening and being invited to share in it is a privilege and an honor. If we establish an atmosphere where our students and their works are treated with respect, we will go far not only in improving our students' writing, but in boosting their self-esteem and confidence as well.

SECTION VII:

Managing Writing and the Computer

(or How to Be Everything to Everybody....)

Ms. Rodrigues has just returned from a three-day training workshop on how to introduce computers in her writing class. The workshop was fabulous, the ideas presented made sense, the luncheons were outstanding, and meeting so many people whose concern with writing equals hers, was reassuring. Back in her class, Ms. Rodrigues has the computer delivered to her classroom door while the kids watch in awe.

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Two weeks later, Ms. Rodrigues is ready to throw the computer out of the window! Too many students, not enough time... not enough computers... and worse, the kids are all at different levels.... Too many problems with the software, the hardware, the printer. She is a teacher, she decides. Not a juggler, not a magician, not a jack-of-all-trades. But she is not a quitter either and the training sessions made so much sense! Before she gives the computer back (thank you very much) she decides to give it one more shot. She had been given a troubleshooting number at the end of the training sessions. Ms. Rodrigues is skeptical — a computer may answer the phone — but she is determined to get help. She dials 1-800-322-1030 because she is in Massachusetts. If she were calling from another state, she would have dialed 1-800-225-7931. The phone rings once... twice... As soon as someone answers, Ms. Rodrigues asks the first question:

Q. How can I teach writing when I have so many other things to teach?

A. Writing is a process and as such it is interconnected with many other types of learning activities taking place in your classroom. The different stages of the writing process are related to other types of learning such as listening, asking for information, communicating with others, reading. You do not stop teaching other things so you can teach writing.

In addition to language skills, cognitive skills are also being developed as students go through the process of writing: deciding which information is relevant, solving problems, organizing, comparing and contrasting, drawing conclusions, distinguishing between facts and opinions.

Think of writing not as writing time but as learning time. As the students listen to your questions in the prewriting stage they are acquiring listening skills; as you review vocabulary that is relevant to the writing assignment, students are acquiring new vocabulary items; as you ask students to discuss different topics with each other, they are learning communication skills; as students read what they or others have written, they are acquiring reading skills. Once the information has been presented to the class, writing comes as a culmination of learning.

Q. How can I teach writing when I have so little time with my students?

A. When we talk about "teaching writing" we don't mean it's going to be done in one year. Teaching writing starts when children are able to express themselves in written form and it never ends. All you have to do is add to what your students already know. The teacher who "inherits" your students will do what you haven't been able to do. As with everything else in education, it's a cumulative process, each teacher adding to what the previous teacher has accomplished. See yourself as a link in a chain. Do the best you can for now.

It may help to think of your writing program in blocks of thirty minutes a week. If you have that much time, you can have a writing program that works!

Q. What do you mean "I can have a writing program that works" if I'm only able to dedicate thirty minutes a week to writing?

A. Remember that at the **prewriting** stage all the activities — listening, reading, talking, discussing — are already part of your daily teaching activities. Start with prewriting activities (brainstorming, reading, discussing, question/answer periods, etc.) which are related to a topic which is part of the curriculum. You may have as many prewriting sessions as you think are needed to clarify the topic. Each **prewriting** activity may focus on one of the different skill areas in which your students need practice.

Following the **prewriting** activities, there will be one writing session during which all students will have an opportunity to write with or without the computer. Because in most classes we have visited, the computer per student ratio is very low, we recommend that students only sit at the computer when they have a fairly clear idea of what it is that they are going to write. This idea they will have acquired through well developed **prewriting** activities.

After students write a first draft, you will design activities to help them polish that first draft until it shines! That means that the weekly writing time will be organized around **rewriting** activities that take into consideration student level of proficiency, their individual writing styles, their writing pace, their learning styles, etc. For example: the first students to print out their written pieces go back to their seats, and (1) read them aloud (in a soft voice) to try to spot the more obvious typos, errors, or gaps; (2) work with classmates — with your questions as a guide — in order to get feedback for improving the writing piece; (3) read the piece aloud to a small "response group" with the same objec-

tive; (4) take the piece home and get feedback from parents/siblings; (5) have a conference with you — and remember, you're a coach, an editor, not an evaluator — in order to give the piece a last polish.

Remember that all these activities are not performed in one day. Rather, they take place over weeks. In addition, at some point while these activities are taking place, students may have gone back to the computer one or more times to revise and integrate into their writing piece feedback received.

Because not all students are at the same level of language and writing proficiency — and even if they were they work at a different pace — it is clear what the scenario is going to be. At any given time during the writing period you will have different students doing different things. Some will be composing at the computer; some will be "warming up" prior to composing at the computer; others will be reading what they've written, either to themselves or to classmates; and others will be engaged in the many activities related to the writing process. You'll be walking around helping students move along.

Q. I'm one... they are many.... How can I help everyone at the same time?

A. Don't panic! This sounds more difficult than it really is. Here are some tips on how to manage your writing class:

- Have students work in pairs at the computer. Two minds working at the computer accomplish more than one because one student's problems with the hardware or the software may be solved by the other without the need to call on you for help.
- Have students sit at the computer to compose *only when they know what they're going to write*. How do you know that they are ready to write? Simple. They're ready when they've participated actively in the **prewriting** activities, when they have discussed their ideas with others, and when they have verbally expressed the ideas/stories they'll put in writing.
- Walk around and, as you spot students who have finished reading their printed assignments, pair them up and have them read their pieces to each other.
- Cycle students through the computer a second time as they complete their **rewriting** activities and want to go back and revise their pieces.
- As students get their texts revised, pair them up and again have them read to each other.
- Before you ask students to read their pieces aloud to themselves or to each other, make sure they have guiding questions that you have already written on the board. These questions will give order and focus to the process of writing and will be critical to the difficult task of writers providing feedback to writers. Some of these questions might be:

  Is the writing piece easy to read?

  Does it have a beginning?

  Does it have a proper order?

  Is it interesting?

Does it have an end?

Does each sentence have a period (or question mark) at the end?

Do sentences start with a capital letter? Are there too many **and**'s and **then**'s?

Of course there are many other questions that can be asked in order to help students improve their writing pieces and those written by others. The nature and complexity of the questions will depend on your curriculum and the level of your students. In "Guiding the Writing Conference" (Section VI) you'll find many examples of the kinds of questions you can ask to best help your students improve their writing. In the "Rewriting" section of the *Guidebook* you will find many practical suggestions that may help students with their rewriting activities.

Q. How can I teach writing when I have so many different levels in the same classroom?

A. You are not conducting an activity which requires all students to do the same thing at the same time; thus, in the case of writing, multilevel classrooms may turn out to be a blessing, not a problem.

If you had twenty-five students and twenty-five computers you would like all your students to write at the computers together. I know the thought of twenty-five little computer wizards happily pecking at the computer keyboard fills your heart with warmth! Well, stop dreaming. You aren't in Computerland. You don't have twenty-five computers. The chances of your having five computers in your classroom in the next five years are pretty slim. (Do you know what the odds are of winning when you play Megabucks?) This hard fact of life established, your best bet is to hope for students of different levels so that each group of two or three will be at different stages of the writing process and you can cycle them through the computer. Here are some hints to work with multilevel classes:

- Identify some of your best students who can work with others in a tutorial relationship. As these students finish their work, they could be assigned to assist individual students who are having trouble. They can also lead work in small groups.

- Conduct prewriting activities at different levels of linguistic and cognitive competencies. For example, when brainstorming, start with **yes/no** questions, proceed with **either/or** questions, and then to **what, when, where,** and **why** questions.

  Keep in mind that in many cases the same question is appropriate for students at different levels; it is the completeness of the response that will vary. It is important to make sure that the more advanced students do not answer all the easy questions, leaving the less advanced with nothing to say. You will need to find ways to remind more advanced students when to be quiet and give others a chance!

- The choice of topics in a multilevel classroom for writing should not be an issue. Individuals will write according to their level of competence. Again, as in the case of prewriting questions, the topic may be the same but the completeness of the response will vary.

Q. Is there any special way that I should arrange the furniture?

A. In some of the classrooms we have visited, teachers have placed their computers in the back of the room to avoid distracting the class. The computer should be placed where most convenient for you and your students. At some of the schools we have seen, two teachers share the computer so it had to be placed where easily accessible to both classes. In some classrooms there is a table located near the computer where students waiting to use the computer read the papers aloud to themselves, read to each other, make changes, etc.

Q. When should my students start using the computer?

A. Yesterday! As soon as students have worked with a planner, have notes, or have discussed their writing intentions with others, they are ready to use the computer. Don't wait until they've mastered their typing skills. This might take a very long time! The students will be motivated to learn typing skills as long as they know they are going to use the computer for writing.

Q. How can I monitor effective computer use?

A. We are providing you with a chart which you can copy and put on the bulletin board. The chart will act as a classroom organizer, give you an at-a-glance idea of who has or hasn't (and how many times) used the computer.

Q. Are there teaching styles that are more effective when writing with the computer?

A. Teachers who are highly regimented in their writing instruction (that is, teachers who want their students to proceed through the writing process in a linear fashion, all starting and finishing at the same time), may experience difficulty with the process approach to writing, with or without a computer. The most effective teachers we have seen in action were the ones who felt comfortable at managing their students at different stages of the writing process. These teachers were not bothered by having different students engaged in various tasks related to writing activities.

Q. What kind of support do I need to be effective?

A. For teachers who are not at ease with the computer, we have provided a troubleshooting guide (Section IX of the *Guidebook*). This section is geared towards the Apple computer for the simple reason that the Apple was the computer used at most of the schools we visited. Do consult the guide when faced with a problem.

When you find out that you will be teaching a computer-based writing course, please get in touch with your computer coordinator at the school or district level. Establish a working relationship with this person, find out about his/her schedule availability and phones where he/she can be reached. Do this before or just as you start classes. Don't wait until you have a problem to frantically look for the computer coordinator — who is nowhere to be found when you most need assistance!

Q. What about effective writing instruction? Where do I look for support?

A. In the *Guidebook*, we have tried to suggest several ways to conduct effective writing instruction. In addition, we suggest that you enlist the help of the writing coordinator or resource teacher at your school or district. These individuals will gladly answer questions that you may have. We also recommend that you read *The Effective Writing Teacher* (John Collins, The NETWORK, Inc., 1985) for suggestions on how to manage writing instruction.

Q. How can I keep track of my students' writing?

A. The best way to keep track of your students' writing and to watch their progress is with a Writing Folder. Let me say a little about the folder itself. You can make it out of anything and be as elaborate or decorative as you wish. We have found that a simple file folder will work beautifully. Also make the folder an appealing idea, a place where students want to keep their writing because it is a safe place and you treat it with respect. Remember, part of that old ailment, writers' block, can be attributed to lack of self-esteem and dignity. So dignify their work and establish a special place where you and they can go and work without fear or public scrutiny to improve their writing.

Q. How does the Writing Folder actually work?

A. Each time students work at the computer make sure they *print two copies* of their piece. Make sure they have *dated* the copies so you can watch their progress chronologically. One copy is for them, the other for the Writing Folder. Their copy is for sharing and their own notes. They may wish to take it home and share it with family and friends. But the second copy is for your reference and forms the basis for discussions at future writing conferences. Because you will be using the second copy with the student for instructional purposes, it is important to *not mark* it up with a red pen (or any writing instrument for that matter). Remember, this is their work you are referencing and as soon as you make a change in the text, it is no longer solely their writing.

Q. But how will I be able to make corrections?

A. Let me say more about the folder, especially the second copy of the text. The students' own writing is the point of departure for your instruction. For example, if a piece of writing could be improved through the appropriate use of verb tenses, you may wish to make a note to yourself to probe for this at the next writing conference with that particular student. Please resist the temptation to mark up the copy in the folder with red ink. Instead, attach a comment pad to the left side of the open folder and make your notes there. You may wish to use the pad to write notes or suggestions to the student. This is a fine idea and prompts informal writing and communication about writing. This may also take place on the computer by using a communications/informal writing disk such as "Mailbag." First and foremost, your notes should be helpful. Your questions should prompt the student to locate the cause of your concern, and once they have found it and acknowledged it, you can then probe further for *their* desires to make changes and improvements. This keeps the ownership of the piece where it belongs — with the author, the student. **Note:** If you keep a running log of your comments for each piece of writing for each student, you will be able to review easily the progress of that student and develop separate activities based on your review of their writing to improve specific aspects of their text. The context of their writing, the text itself, is how and where you teach specific constructions and grammar. This makes it real and meaningful for the students and

they are motivated to make immediate use of the learning — in their text.

Q. I put a lot of time and effort into my writing program; how do I know that it is working?

A. You will know it is working when:

- Students beg you to use the computer.
- Students write longer pieces.
- Students develop a sense of ownership concerning their writing; they want them displayed, they want others to read their work, and they show pride in their accomplishments.
- Students learn to accept suggestions for revisions from their peers.
- Students learn to accept their peers' criticism.
- Students feel more secure about their writing; they share their writing more readily with others.
- Students are more willing to write.
- Students see writing as a manageable task; they do it with less effort.
- **Finally, because you have kept your students' compositions in a folder, both you and the class can measure growth by comparing the first and last assignments done during the year.**

SECTION VIII:

How Can Parents Contribute?

SUMMARY:

1. Encourage the child to explore the topic with parents/relatives prior to writing about it. This could take the form of "interviewing" the parents, discussing the topic, asking opinions. It can very well be done in the child's first language.

2. Encourage parents to explore the topic with the child. Copy the checklists provided and send them home in order to give the parents' efforts direction and purpose.

3. Think of a project that will draw the parents' attention to the writing the child is doing: diary, parents responding to the children's writing, newsletter prepared by the students and sent home, author's day, writing contest, etc.

The role that LEP parents play in their children's schooling is not necessarily what is expected from them in the American school system. Parental views on education are tied to their cultural background. As is the case with most people who move from their homeland, there is a developmental process they pass through as they become integrated into a new community. At first, most newly arrived parents are busy just surviving. They have little free time because they are holding several jobs to provide for their families. Simple survival in a new country demands a great deal of time and energy.

Many parents have little or no knowledge of English and are not familiar with the American customs. This does not mean that their life experience should be invalidated. The American educational system may seem complicated, for it probably differs from the one in their countries. In this new and unfamiliar environment there are expectations that LEP parents may feel unprepared to confront. They may feel unable to help with their children's schooling even if they want to.

If the United States is a country that was built by immigrants, it only seems natural that we should learn to "celebrate our differences" and not make believe that we are all alike. It is important that LEP students *and* parents be proud of their cultural heritage and of who they are. What is different is not either better or worse, but different.

Many parents want to be involved with their children's schoolwork, but are unsure of what to do or how to do it. Many say they would welcome more guidance and ideas from teachers (*What Works,* U.S. Department of Education, 1986). Because research has shown how important home support is for student achievement, it follows that if we can enlist parents' help our jobs as educators will be become easier.

How Do You Involve Parents?

It takes more than an occasional parent-teacher conference and school open houses to involve parents. Parents should be aware of *how* they can help their children. Maybe you would like to send this letter home as classes start:

Dear parent:

This semester we are going to focus on writing skills. Your child will be writing very often. Writing is not easy. Your child will need all the help we can give.

How can you help your child?

1. When your child tells you the topic he/she has chosen to write about, you can help if you ask questions:
   - Why did you choose this topic?
   - How are you going to start?
   - What are some things you want to say?
   - Can I help you with some information?
2. When your child brings home a first draft, you can help if:
   - you ask your child to read it aloud to you, and
   - you offer suggestions, constructive comments, and/or details.

Thank you.

_____

Your child's teacher

In addition, checklists with practical suggestions on how parents can help the child are included. You might want to try some of the suggested activities. Because the help we need is focused on the development of cognitive skills, parents and students can do the activities in their native language. If parents' English is limited, either liaisons, aides or even the students can translate the activities in the checklist. Before you send the activities home, you may want to send home the following letter (we suggest that the letter be translated into the parents' native language).

Dear parent:

Parents are the strongest influence in a child's development. Parents and teachers must work together to help children learn better. This checklist has been developed to offer ways in which you can help your child improve his/her writing skills.

Examine the checklist. Set aside 10-15 minutes each day when you can do one of these activities with your child (maybe while preparing dinner or going to the market). Tape the list on the refrigerator door or any other easily seen place.

After you complete all the activities on this list, please sign the checklist and send it back to me. I'll send you another checklist.

If you have any questions, please call me. Thank you very much.

_____

Your child's teacher

The charts that follow the three checklists (beginning on page 70) will help you in your efforts to involve parents at the various stages of the writing process.

CHECKLIST 1

Name of Student _____ Date _____

Name of School _____ Grade _____

Name of Teacher _____

Put a check ( ) each time you do one of these activities.

_____

Parent's signature *Date*

Read your child a story. Move your finger from left to right across the page as you read. ☐☐☐☐

Play a game of opposites. You say "happy", the child says the opposite; then it's the child's turn to say a word and you say the opposite. ☐☐☐☐

Have the child close his/her eyes and feel, smell, or touch an object. Without opening his/her eyes the child tries to guess what the object is. ☐☐☐☐

Have the child close his/her eyes and listen to noises (clapping, tapping your foot, tapping a pencil against wood, water running, etc.). See if the child can identify the source of the sounds. ☐☐☐☐

Go to the movies or watch a TV program with your child. Then ask your child questions: How did it begin? How did it end? What happened first, next, and last in the program? What part did you enjoy the most/least? Why? How would you have ended the story? ☐☐☐☐

Have child describe family members and friends. ☐☐☐☐

Have child report to you what other people are doing in the house. Have the child close his/her eyes and describe the room you are in. ☐☐☐☐

While you are waiting for a bus or in a waiting room, have the child describe other people and what they are doing. ☐☐☐☐

Ask the child to listen to the weather forecast and report to you. ☐☐☐☐

Help child establish what family members like or dislike. ☐☐☐☐

Show child photos of family and friends. Talk about the people in the photos. ☐☐☐☐

CHECKLIST 2

Name of Student _____ Date _____

Name of School _____ Grade _____

Name of Teacher _____

Put a check ( ) each time you do one of these activities.

_____

Parent's signature *Date*

Show your child a magazine picture. After the child looks at it for a few minutes, close the magazine and then have the child describe it to you. ☐☐☐☐

Watch a TV program with your child. Ask what happened first, next, and last in the program. ☐☐☐☐

Make faces and have your child tell you what your face expresses: happiness, anger, surprise, sadness, etc. ☐☐☐☐

Ask the child what his/her favorite season is. Are seasons different in the country you came from? In what way are they similar to seasons in the U.S.? Establish with the child what the differences/similarities are. ☐☐☐☐

Ask the child to read a story to you. Ask questions about the story. ☐☐☐☐

Play a game of association. You say a word, and the child says the first five things that come to his/her mind. Now the child says the word and you provide the associations. ☐☐☐☐

Have your child look at a calendar. Are there any holidays this month in the U.S.? What about the holidays in the country where you come from? Why are these days considered holidays? What happened on those days to make them important? ☐☐☐☐

Help your child establish what different members of the family like or dislike and the reasons. Have the child make a **like/ dislike** chart followed by reasons. ☐☐☐☐

Ask your child what his/her favorite animal is. Have him/her tell you what the characteristics of this animal are. Where does it live? What does it eat? ☐☐☐☐

Ask the child to listen to the weather report and report it to you. ☐☐☐☐

Point to an object and have the child use at least five words to describe it. Example: **orange** — round, sweet, yellow, tasty, juicy. Have the child choose the word and you provide the five words. ☐☐☐☐

Help the child write a postcard to a member of the family, stamp it, and mail it. ☐☐☐☐

Pretend you are a newspaper reporter. "Interview" your child. Have the child "interview" you. ☐☐☐☐

Have child describe other members of the family and friends; their physical and emotional characteristics. ☐☐☐☐

CHECKLIST 3

Name of Student _____ Date _____

Name of School _____ Grade _____

Name of Teacher _____

Put a check ( ) each time you do one of these activities.

_____

Parent's signature *Date*

Play "I'm thinking of an object." Help the child to discover what object you're thinking of. Answer the child's questions with **yes/no** ("Is it round?" **yes/no.** "Is it red?" **yes/no,** etc.) ☐☐☐☐

Ask the child to read a story to you. Ask questions about the story. ☐☐☐☐

Ask your child to "interview" friends and neighbors about the country they have come from. Have the child report to you. ☐☐☐☐

Have your child write birthdays of family and friends on a calendar. Encourage the child to make cards and write to those people. ☐☐☐☐

Talk to your child about your trip to the U.S. Help the child find information about what was going on in your country at that time. ☐☐☐☐

Choose a song from your country and teach the child how to sing it. ☐☐☐☐

As you tell your child a story, have him/her be responsible for the sound effects. Then switch roles. ☐☐☐☐

Show your child the headlines of a newspaper. Ask: What do you think this article is about? Encourage guesses. Then let the child read the article. Ask: Have your ideas changed? Does the headline give you a good clue as to what the article is about? ☐☐☐☐

Have your child tell you about a dream he/she had. Talk about it. Ask questions about the dream. ☐☐☐☐

Have the child listen to the news and report it to you. ☐☐☐☐

Watch a TV program with your child. Ask questions about the program, discuss the characters, ask **why** something happened. ☐☐☐☐

Have the child talk about family members and friends: "What does he/she do?" "What special skills does he/she have?" "How were these skills learned?" ☐☐☐☐

While you are waiting for a bus or in a waiting room, have the child describe other people, what they are doing, and how they are behaving. What can the child tell from observing people? Where might they work? Do they look happy? Unhappy? Impatient? How can one tell? ☐☐☐☐

Parent Involvement: Roles and Activities
PREPARATION

TEACHER	CHILD	PARENTS
• Has bilingual aides translate a letter to send home explaining the writing program • No bilingual aides available and no resources to do it? Then give the children a simple message in English that they can translate into their own language and take home • Has bilingual aide contact parents re: a parent/teacher meeting to explain activities and role in the writing program • Sends checklist home translated into the students' native language • At the meeting, explains to parents the function of the checklists and the goals of the program • Describes to child the activities that are part of the program and why it is important to have the parents' help	• Helped by the teacher, becomes aware of how to enlist the parents' help (or other members of the family) • Understands how parents will use the checklist • Understands the writing program	• Come to school to meet with teacher and learn about the writing program • At the meeting, examine checklist and discuss it with aides and teachers • If not at meeting, talk to aides about checklist • Contact or send message through child if further clarification is needed

Parent Involvement: Roles and Activities
PREWRITING

TEACHER	CHILD	PARENTS
• Helps student gather information • Encourages and helps select independent reading • Helps develop observational skills (observe and describe scenes, question and answer, observe others, compare/contract) • Helps develop auditory discrimination (listen to tapes, listen to music, listen to others) • Helps develop interviewing techniques • Leads discussion/ brainstorming sessions • Helps select topics for writing that will make full use of child's and/or family's personal experience • Teaches how to get feedback from parents/family	• Gathers information (books, magazine, encyclopedia, members of the family) • With guidance from teacher, interviews classmates/family/friends/other school personnel • Participates in classroom discussions • Discusses topic chosen with teacher, classmates, or family members	• Help child develop topic • Discuss topic chosen by child • Read to child (stories, newspapers, magazines) • Tell child about family experiences • Watch TV with child and ask questions concerning materials viewed

Parent Involvement: Roles and Activities
WRITING

TEACHER	CHILD	PARENTS
• Helps students to enter text in the computer • Maintains supportive environment for writing • Makes sure students know why they are writing (purpose: newsletter, message to parents, writing contest, interclass communication, etc.); whom they are writing to (audience); and how they are writing (format) • Looks at first draft as temporary, as a working copy	• Writes first draft without being troubled by surface errors • Writes to a specific audience per assignment • Writes in the format required	• Ask questions that show interest in the writing student is doing

Parent Involvement: Roles and Activities
REWRITING

TEACHER	CHILD	PARENTS
• Helps students read their own writing objectively • Encourages and organizes class for pair and group work (peer editing) • Shows how to integrate peer feedback into the text • Suggests ways in which to seek feedback from family in order to improve text • Helps to add/expand/ enlarge text (by asking appropriate questions) • Provides guiding questions to help rewriting	• Reads own text aloud (to him/herself) or to others) • Reads text to group or to others • Listens to classmates reading theirs texts • Asks questions provided by teacher to help classmate(s) revise • Integrates constructive comments into own text • Seeks feedback from family and integrates it into own writing • Rewrites text	• Listen to child reading his/her own text; make comments, ask questions to clarify topic, praise good work, offer feedback • Add more information • Contribute to teacher's efforts be reacting positively to teacher's/ aide's communication attempts

Parent Involvement: Roles and Activities
FOLLOW UP

TEACHER	CHILD	PARENTS
• Supports aide's/liaison's efforts to keep contact with parent • Encourages student/ parent linkages by organizing writing events (contests, newsletter, message board, etc.)	• Contributes to newsletter, bulletin board, message board, or other writing event organized by teacher • Shows parents writing done • Insists on parents' participation	• Encourage writing by coming to school for writing events organized by teacher • Show interest in writing done by child: listen to it, make helpful comments, praise effort, etc.

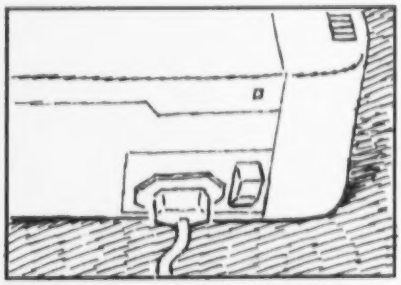
SECTION IX:

My Computer and I: Troubleshooting

This section of the *Guidebook* deals primarily with troubleshooting your computer in case anything goes wrong. It will cover all parts of the computer: the Apple IIe, the drive, the monitor, and the printer. (We choose to use the Apple IIe because it is the most used computer in schools; however, the descriptions would apply to most other computers.) First, it will explain basic techniques for installing and checking the various connections. It will give you detailed step-by-step tips for what to do in case something does go wrong. Lastly it will provide you with a **problem report form** so that you may fill in any pertinent information that will help the computer technician (or other computer experts) get you back on track. It is assumed that the computer already has a controller card installed in slot #6 with drives and connecting cables attached.

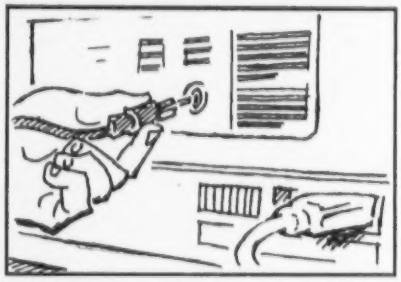
Connecting the Apple IIe

1. Connect the electrical cord into the back of the computer (connection can only fit one way) and then plug into wall socket.

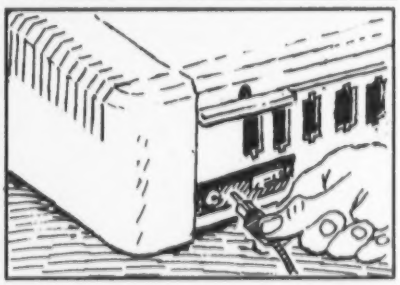


Connecting the monitor

1. Plug the end of the monitor cable (usually a very thin and short cable) into the back of the monitor.

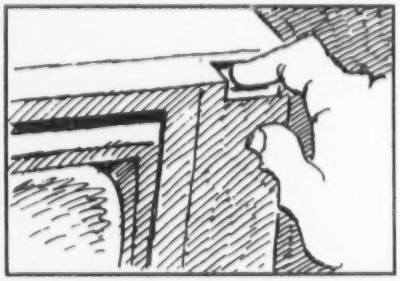


2. Plug the other end of the monitor cable into the Apple IIe's monitor outlet (at the far left as you face the *back* of the computer—it has a monitor symbol right above it).
   NOTE: *It does not matter which end of this monitor cable goes to the monitor or the computer.*
3. Plug the power cable into a 3-hole grounded outlet.



CONTROLLING AND ADJUSTING YOUR MONITOR

4. **On/Off switch:**



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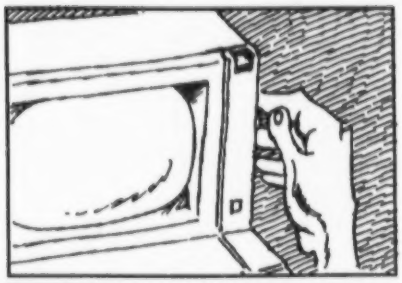
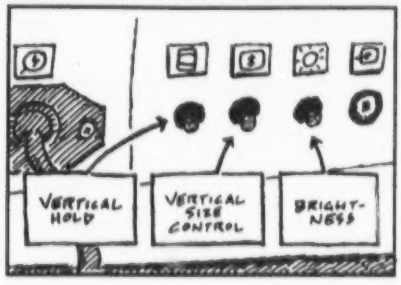


4. **Contrast control.** In the new green monitors this control is found about midway on the right side of the monitor. Rotating it increases or decreases the degree of difference between the lightest and the darkest sections of the screen.

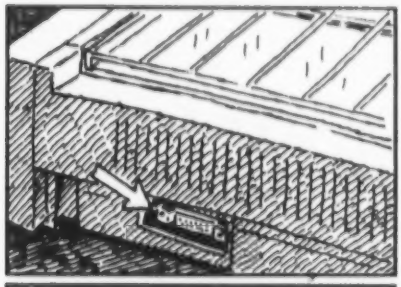


OTHER CONTROLS — Located on the back of the monitor:

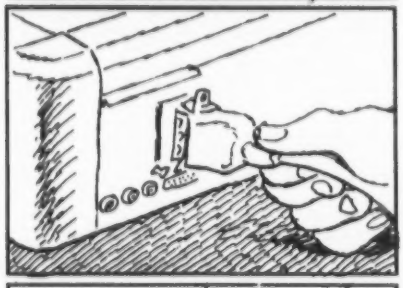
6. **The vertical hold,** which brings up and down rolling under control;
7. **The vertical size control,** which lengthens or shortens the vertical height of the picture;
8. **The brightness control,** which which controls the brightness of the picture.

Connecting the printer

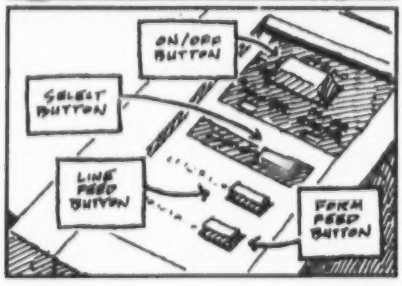
It is assumed that a **super serial card** has been installed in the computer (usually in slot #1).



1. Connect the multi-pin cable into the back of the printer.



2. Connect the other end of the printer cable into the computer. Once again, it is the one with the multi-pins.
   NOTE: *The cable ends are exactly the same, so it does not matter which goes in the computer or printer. Also note that when plugging the cable in, it can only fit one way.*



OTHER CONTROLS — Imagewriter printer:

3. **On/Off button.** The green power light comes on whenever the printer is plugged in and the power on/off switch is on.
4. **Select button.** When the select button is on, the printer can receive data from the Apple computer. When the select button is off, you can control the printer by using the line feed button or the form feed button.

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5. **Line feed button.** Each time you press the line feed button, the printer will advance the paper one line. The line feed button only works when the select light is off. Holding down the line feed button will cause the printer to feed paper continuously, until you release the button.
6. **Form feed button.** When you press the form feed button, the printer feeds blank paper continuously until it reaches the top of the next page, where it stops. The form feed button only works when the select light is off.
   NOTE: *The printer does not work if the front cover of the printer is off. When the cover is off the select light is also off and the printer cannot receive any data from the Apple computer. If this happens, be sure to put the cover on and press the select button.*
   REMEMBER: *The select light must be on for the printer to be able to receive data from the computer.*
7. **Paper error light.** When there is only about an inch of the paper left in the printer, the paper error light comes on, and the printer stops printing. If you want to print the next line or so (or finish a form that is almost done), just push the select button once for each additional line to be printed.
   WARNING: *The printer head and the platen will be damaged if you attempt to print without paper!*

Loading the paper

You can put ordinary typing paper, business forms, and letterhead into the Apple Imagewriter. You may find it more convenient to use special **pin-feed paper** or **roll paper** made for computer -driven printers.

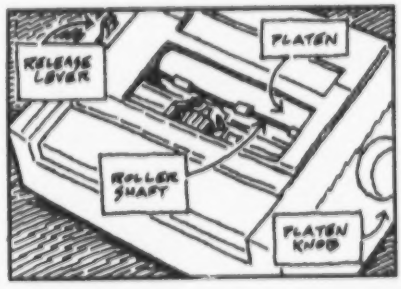
You can adjust the printer to receive pin-feed, roll paper or single sheets from 3 to 10 inches in width. This includes the standard 9 1/2 inch wide pin-feed paper all the way to label stock, for jobs such as printing mailing labels.

WARNING: *Never put paper with staples or paper clips in any printer!*

Setting the pin-feeder width

The first time you use pin-feed paper in your printer you will need to set the spacing of the sprockets. Here is how to do it:

1. Tear off a single sheet of the pin-feed paper you are going to use, to serve as a gauge.
2. Make sure the printer is **off.**



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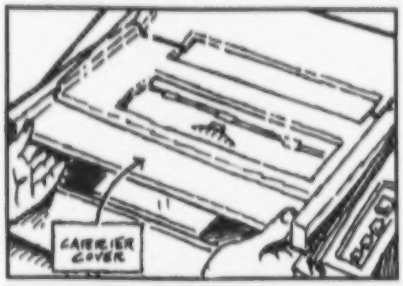

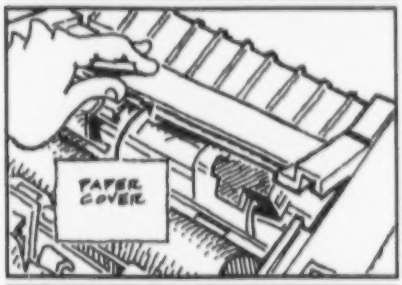

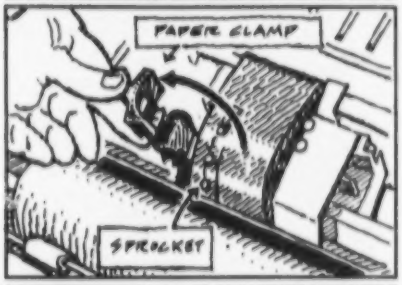

3. Remove both the carrier cover and the paper cover.
4. Set the release lever to the friction (forward) position.
5. The sprockets are the two black plastic parts inside the machine at the rear. Lift up the two tabs that point toward the center, so that the hinged paper clamps over the two sprockets swing outward. Find the white sprocket release levers on the side of each sprocket. When the white levers are pushed toward the rear, the sprockets are free to slide along their shaft. When the levers are forward, the sprockets are locked in place.
6. Push the white sprocket release levers to the rear (so that the sprockets are free to slide) and place the single sheet of pin-feed paper to serve as a gauge over the sprockets. Position the sprockets so that the pins fit through the holes in the paper. Snap the paper clamps back into place.
7. Feed the forward end of the paper under the rubber platen and into the printer, as you would in a typewriter, by turning the platen knob. Lift the roller shaft in the front of the machine and guide the paper under it. Then set the release lever to the pin-feed (rear) position.
8. You can now move the paper sideways, carrying the two sprockets with it, until it is centered with respect to the printing area. The two red rings at each end of the roller shaft help you center it. When the paper is in place, pull the release lever forward to the friction position to hold it in place.
9. Open the hinged cover on each sprocket and push the white lever forward. Make sure the sprocket pins fit easily in the holes in the paper, without pulling inward or outward.
10. Push the release lever back to the pin-feed position.

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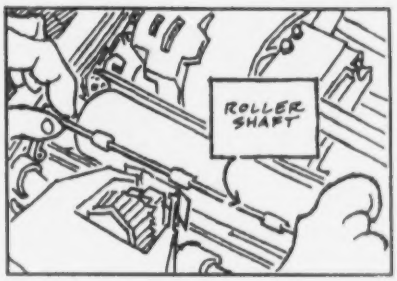
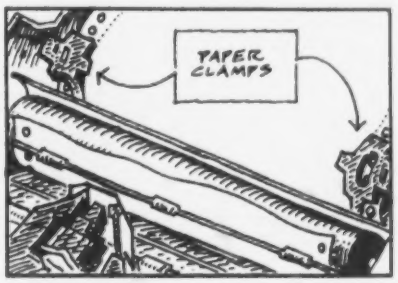
Loading Pin-Feed Paper

Follow these steps to load pin-feed paper into the printer.

1. If the end of the paper you are going to use is not straight, tear it off at the nearest perforation.
2. Make sure the printer is off.
3. Remove both the carrier cover and the paper cover.
4. If necessary, set the pin-feeder width as described earlier.
5. Set the release lever to the friction (forward) position.
6. Grasp the roller shaft at both ends, and pull it forward.



7. Lift the paper clamps on the two black sprockets at the rear of the machine, folding them outward to expose the sprockets.
8. Place the paper over the sprockets so that the pins go through the holes. Snap the paper clamps back down to hold the paper in place.
9. Pull the pin-feed paper into the printer by turning the platen knob clockwise (top away from you).
10. When the end of the paper comes up to the front of the platen, under the type head, snap the roller shaft shut on it.
11. Close the paper clamps on the sprockets.
12. Push the release lever back to the pin-feed position.
13. Replace the paper cover and the carrier cover.
14. Line up the first perforation to the top of the type head.



Loading Plain Paper

To load paper without pin-feed holes—either a single sheet, ditto or a roll—do the following.

1. Turn the power on and then off. This moves the type head as far left as it will go. Leave the power off.
2. Open the clear plastic lid on the top of the machine.
3. Set the release lever to the pin-feed (rear) position.

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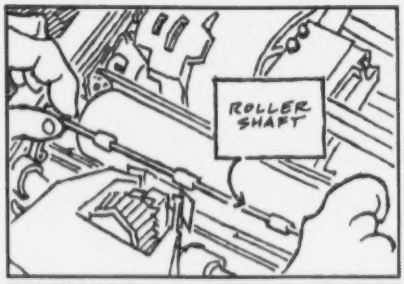
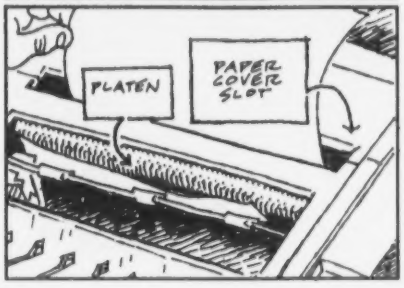


4. Grasp the roller shaft by both ends, and pull it forward.



5. If you are using a roll of paper and the end of the paper is not straight, cut across it with scissors. Push the end of the paper down into the slot in the paper cover, feeding it around the platen as you would in a typewriter.
6. When the paper comes up in front of the platen, move it sideways to the location you want. The red rings on the roller shaft indicate the limits of the printer's line of type. Snap the roller shaft shut.
7. Set the release lever to the friction (forward) position.

Adjusting for paper thickness

Your printer will make higher quality copies and give you longer service if you take care to adjust it for the thickness of the paper you are using.

Remove the carrier cover and look inside the printer. On the right side, near the platen knob, you will find a white plastic lever. When this lever is pushed all the way back (toward the platen), the printer is correctly set to print on a single thickness of ordinary paper. When the lever is pulled all the way forward (toward the control panel), the printer is set for a four-sheet multiple form. As you move the lever back and forth you can see a slight movement of the horizontal metal carrier bar on which the type head slides, compensating for the paper thickness. You can also feel that it clicks in four positions, corresponding to the one to four sheets of ordinary paper.

In short: lever toward the back = single sheet. Lever toward the front = multiple sheets.

Installing and Removing the Ribbon

The ribbon cassette supplied with your printer is a special type, made specifically for this machine. You can get additional ribbons (and now in color) from a dealer. Make sure that you get the proper ribbon for your printer.

Changing the ribbon is fast and easy. To install the ribbon follow these steps:

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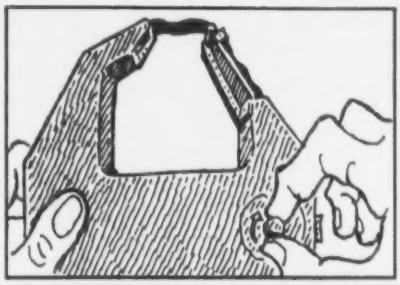
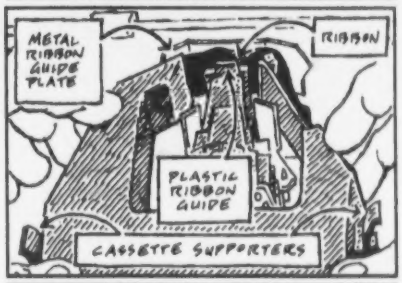
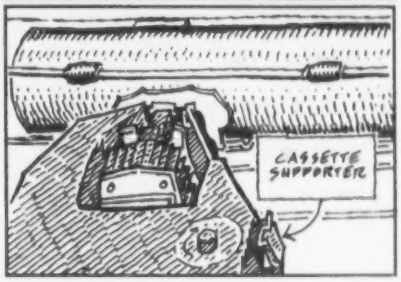
1. Make sure the power is **off.**
2. Remove the carrier cover (front cover).
3. Hold the ribbon in your hand. Take up the slack in the ribbon by turning the knob on the cassette once or twice in the **direction of the arrow.**



4. Carefully slip the exposed portion of the ribbon between the black plastic ribbon guide and the thin metal ribbon guide plate (the part that nearly touches the paper). At the same time, guide the cassette downwards onto the ribbon deck. The two black plastic cassette supporters (the parts that stick up) fit into the notches on the sides of the cassette.



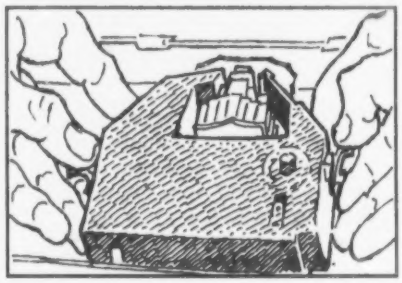
5. The cassette should easily snap in place with a single motion. If it refuses to go down completely, or if the ribbon is caught in the space between the ribbon guide and guide plate, turn the knob on the cassette slowly in the direction of the arrow. When properly installed, the cassette should lie flat on the ribbon deck.



To Remove the Ribbon

To remove a used ribbon cassette, turn off the power and remove the carrier cover (front cover). Gently spread the two black plastic cassette supporters (on each side of the cassette) and lift up the cassette. *Voila*, it's done .

WARNING: *When pulling the cassette away, be careful not to get the ribbon caught between the ribbon guide and the guide plate.*



Testing Your Printer

Inside the Apple Imagewriter is a microprocessor with a permanent program that can print a test alphabet on command. The printer does not have to be connected to a computer to run this program. (It will work either connected or disconnected to the computer.) This is a handy way to put the machine through its paces before connecting it to your system.

To run the built-in test, follow these steps:

1. If you have not already done so, load paper and ribbon into the printer.

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2. Plug the printer into an electrical power outlet and turn the printer on with the **on/off** switch. The power light should come on.
3. If the Select light also comes on, press the **select** button once to turn it **off.**
4. Press the **line feed** button a few times to make sure the paper feeds smoothly through the machine.
5. Turn the power **off.**
6. Press the **form feed** button and continue holding it while you turn the power back on. Then release the **form feed** button. The Apple Imagewriter will print its complete set of characters repeatedly until you press the **on/off** switch to turn the power off. It takes 96 lines to print the entire pattern. (You only need about 6 to 10 lines.)

Examine the printout carefully. All characters should be complete (no dots missing) and neatly aligned. The lines should appear equally black from end to end. Spacing between characters and between lines should be even. If this is not the case, check for correct ribbon insertion, paper loading and thickness settings. If the problem persists, please contact a computer specialist.

Example of built-in test:

```
 !"#$%&'()*+,-./0123456789:;<=>?@ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ[\]^_`abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz{|}~
!"#$%&'()*+,-./0123456789:;<=>?@ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ[\]^_`abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz{|}~ !
"#$%&'()*+,-./0123456789:;<=>?@ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ[\]^_`abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz{|}~ !"
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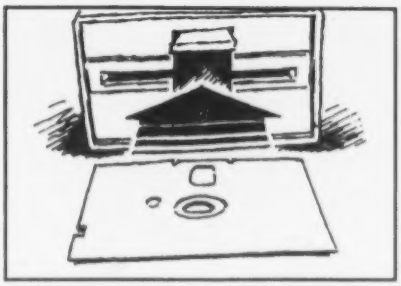
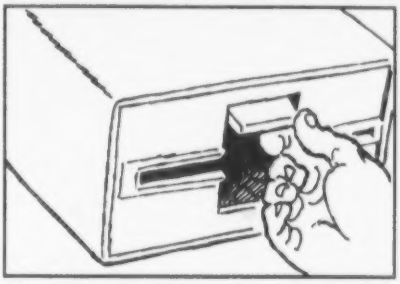
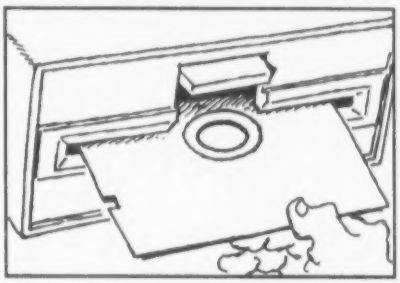
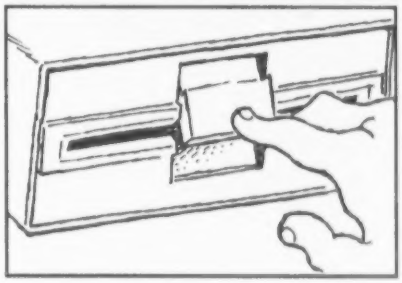
Inserting a Diskette in the Drive





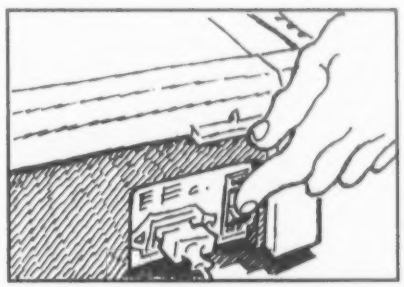




The following instructions explain what to do any time you want to insert a diskette in a **disk drive**.

1. Make sure the **in use** light on the front of the disk drive is **off**. Never remove or insert a diskette when the light is on: doing so may damage the disk or destroy some of the information on it.
2. Lift the small door (or turn latch to the left) on the front of the disk drive. If there is already a diskette in the slot, carefully remove it, and put it in an envelope.
3. Holding the diskette you want to use with your thumb on the label, remove it from its envelope.
4. Gently insert the diskette into the slot of the disk drive, oval-cutout end first, label side up. Be careful not to bend or force the diskette. If you feel any resistance, pull the diskette back out slowly and try again.
5. When the diskette is completely inside, push down slowly on the small disk drive door (or turn latch clockwise) until the door (or latch) is shut.

Starting and Stopping the Apple IIe



There are two ways to start up Apple IIe programs. You use one method when the computer is **off,** the other when the computer is already on.

STARTING UP WITH THE POWER OFF

1. Put the program in drive 1.
2. Turn on the monitor.
3. Reach around the left side of the computer and find the power switch to the lower-left corner. Press the upper half of the switch to turn on the power.

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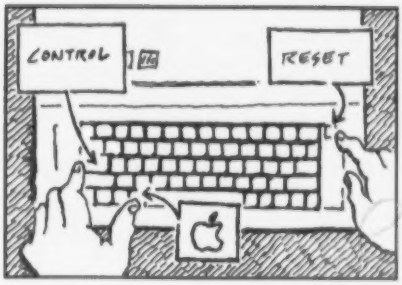
STARTING UP WITH THE POWER ON

Use this method of starting up a program, **or** switching from one program to another when the power is already on. *It reduces wear and tear on the power switch and other computer components.*

1. Make sure the disk drive light is **off**, then take the last disk you were using out of drive 1.
2. Put the program disk you want to use into drive 1.
3. Hold down ⌘ and **control** while you press **reset**, then release all three keys, starting with **reset.**



(If this seems a little awkward, you're doing it right. If it were more convenient, you might do it accidentally.)

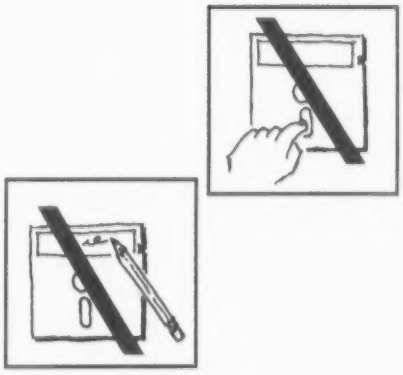
In both cases you will hear a beep, and the **power** indicator on the computer keyboard will light up. A small red lamp on the front of **drive 1** will also light up, and the disk drive will make some whirring and clicking sounds. After a few moments, the sounds will stop and the red light will go out. The program loaded from the disk in drive 1 will present its opening display on the video screen.

If no disk is in the drive: *To stop the drive at any time just press* ***control*** *and* ***reset*** *at the same time. The drive should stop. Then follow procedure above.*

Common sense rules around computers

1. No food or drink.
2. No gum chewing.
3. No liquids (water, soda, paint, glue, etc).
4. No rough play (pushing, shoving, running, etc).
5. *Always* cover your computer before you go home.
6. *Make sure that the computer, monitor, and printer are off.*

Proper care of diskettes



Here are some general rules for handling diskettes:

- Don't touch the diskette (the part that is visible through the oval cutout).
- Hold the diskette by its label or any part of its jacket.
- Always store diskettes in envelopes provided.
- Store diskettes vertically to keep dust from collecting on them.
- Use a felt-tip pen to write on the disk label. Using a pencil or a ball-point pen can put dents on the recording surface.
- Don't use an eraser on a label. Eraser dust can damage the diskette.

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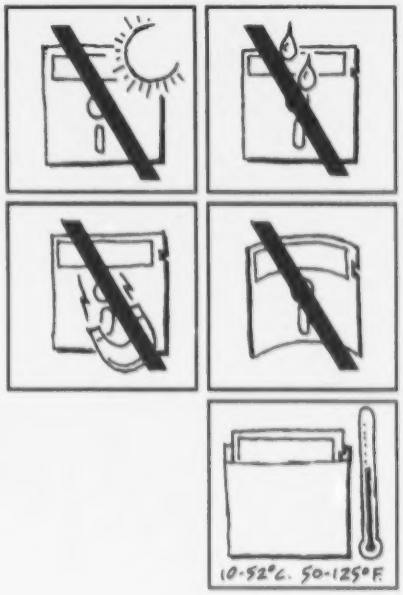
- Don't attach paper clips to disks. Clips can easily be magnetized.
- Keep disks away from direct sunlight, moisture, and extremes of heat or cold. On a hot day, car trunks, dashboards, and glove compartments can be a diskette's worst enemy.
- Keep diskettes away from magnets or devices like telephones, television sets, monitors, drives, and large motors. (All of these create a magnetic field at one time or another.)

If you follow these guidelines, your disks will last forever. (Actually they'll last an average of 150 hours of in-use time — which might as well be forever considering the few seconds it takes to load information from a disk.) If you don't follow these guidelines, you'd better have a backup copy of your diskette.



Symptoms and Remedies

Here's a list of specific symptoms, probable causes, and suggestions for recovering from a variety of disasters. The disasters are grouped under the following five categories:

- Problems starting up a program
- Problems with the disk drive
- Problems with the printer
- Problems with the monitor
- Problems switching from one program to another
- Problems extricating yourself from a program

At any time you are **not** sure what to do, please contact a computer specialist to assist you.

Problems starting up a program:

Here are some common problems you might run into when starting up a program.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	REMEDY
Nothing happens when you turn on the power. (Drive 1 doesn't make a sound.)	The power cord isn't plugged into the outlet, the power cord isn't plugged into the computer, or the disk drive isn't connected to the computer.	Turn the power off, then make sure the power cord is plugged into the computer. Then try again. If that's not the problem, make sure the disk drive is connected to the computer.

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SYMPTOM	CAUSE	REMEDY
Nothing appears on the screen when you turn on the power (even though the disk light comes on and you hear the usual amount of whirring from the disk drive).	The monitor isn't turned on, the monitor isn't plugged in, or the monitor contrast or brightness isn't adjusted properly.	Turn on the monitor. Plug in the monitor. Adjust the monitor contrast or brightness knob. (For computer specialists: if that's not the problem, and you've got the card in slot 3, turn off the power, then try removing the card and starting up the program.)
Program disk won't start up — Drive I keeps whirring.	Program disk is stuck inside the Jacket. Program disk is damaged.	Press **control** and **reset** at the same time to stop the disk drive. Follow procedure to start up with computer already on. Shake diskette before trying again. Use another diskette.
Program disk won't start up — Drive I whirs briefly.	Drive 1 needs to be aligned or adjusted.	Have drive adjusted by computer specialist.
Program won't start up. All you see is a Prompt] and a cursor.	The program on the disk isn't self-starting. (You're most apt to run into this situation if you're using program written by friends or acquired at a users group meeting.)	Type "catalog" and press **return**. This should produce a list (or catalog) of what's on the disk. You can run any of the programs with the letter A in front of them by typing "run", the name of the program, and then pressing **return.** You can run some of the programs with the letter B in front of them by typing "brun", the name of the program and then pressing **return**. (The letters A and B refer to the program's file type.)

Problems with the disk drive:

Here are some common problems you might have with your disk drive.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	REMEDY
You see the message: Drive too fast.	Your disk drive speed is too fast.	Have the speed of your disk drive adjusted.
You see the message: Drive too slow.	Your disk drive speed is too slow.	Have the speed of your disk drive adjusted.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	REMEDY
The disk drive won't stop whirring.	There's no disk in Drive 1, or the disk in Drive 1 isn't formatted.	Press **control** and **reset** at the same time to stop the disk drive, then put disk in drive 1 and start again.
The "wrong" disk drive whirs when you start up the program (when you have 2 drives plugged in).	The disk drive that whirs when you turn on the power is drive 1.	Stop the whirring disk drive by pressing **control** and **reset** at the same time, then put your program disk in drive 1 and start again.
Disk drive light stays on, even whirring sound.	Drive door is open.	Press **control** and **reset** at the same time and wait a moment for drive to stop. Close drive door. Press (space) **control** and **reset** at the same time.
Disk drive periodically makes rattling sound.	Diskette is not properly aligned.	Press **control** and **reset** at the same time to stop the drive. Open drive door, pull out disk, and re-insert it. Close drive door.
	Diskette may not be properly oriented.	Make sure that the oval slot enters the drive first and that the label is on top.
	Diskette may be blank or formatted by another operating system.	Make sure that the diskette is formatted for the computer that you are using. (A diskette formatted for the IBM-PC will not run on the Apple IIe).
Disk drive makes various sounds, then stops; nothing on screen.	Video cable not plugged in. Monitor not turned on.	Make sure that the display device is plugged in and turned on. Also check video cable for tightness; check brightness and contrast contols.

Problems with the printer:

Here are some common problems you might run into when using the printer.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	REMEDY
Unintentional double or triple spacing.	Both your printer and your application program are generating line feeds after every carriage return.	Turn off the automatic line feed switch on the printer (or change the application program's line feed setting to **off**). Check with the computer specialist.
Lines are printing on top of each other.	Neither your printer nor your application program is generating line feeds after carriage returns.	Turn on the automatic line feed switch on your printer. Check with the computer specialist.
Printer will not print.	Front cover is not properly positioned.	Make sure that the front cover fits properly.
	No paper. Select light is **off.**	Insert new sheet or check pin-feed sheets are properly installed. Press select button — light should be **on.**
	Printer cable is loose on back of printer and/or computer.	Check both ends of interface for tightness.
	Interface card is loose.	Turn off computer. Open the cover of the computer. Check interface card in Slot #1 for tightness. Make sure connecting strip is plugged in.
	Fuse is blown.	Check with computer specialist.
	The program is not made to print.	Do a printer self-test to make sure that printer is okay.
Strange character print.	Printer is not configured properly.	Set dip switches to proper configuration (check manual for your printer's proper configuration).
Printing light and dark characters.	Check ribbon. Is it installed properly? Is it old?	Replace ribbon. (See how to replace ribbon on pages 79 & 80.)

Problems with the monitor:

Here are some common problems you might have with your monitor.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	REMEDY
Nothing appears on screen when you turn on the power. (Drive 1 doesn't make a sound.)	The power plug isn't plugged into the wall, the power cord isn't plugged into the computer, or the disk drive isn't connected to the computer.	Turn the power off, then make sure the power cord is plugged into the computer, then try again. If that's not the problem, make sure the disk drive is connected.
Nothing appears on the screen when you turn on the power (even though the disk light comes on and you hear the usual whirring sound from the disk drive).	The monitor isn't turned on, the monitor isn't plugged in, or the monitor contrast or brightness isn't adjusted properly. If that's not the problem, a card in slot 3 could be interfering with your display.	Plug in the monitor. Turn on the monitor. Adjust the monitor contrast or brightness knob. If that's not the problem, and you've got a card in slot 3, turn off the power, then try removing the card and starting up the program.
Screen image is too bright or too dim.	Monitor contrast or brightness isn't set properly.	Adjust the monitor contrast or brightness knob until the display is easy to read.
Unusual sounds or smells emanating from the monitor.	Monitor's electronics are overheating.	Unplug power and video cords immediately and contact a computer specialist.
No picture and on/off switch is in **on** position, but power light is out.	Monitor is not plugged in. **or**	Insert power cord into the outlet properly.
	Bad connection to wall outlet or dead outlet.	Change outlets or check line fuse or circuit breaker. Use another outlet.
No picture, but on/off switch is down and power light is on.	Video cable is not connected to the ⊡ socket on the monitor or the video out socket on the Apple.	Connect video cable properly to the ⊡ socket or video out socket on the Apple II.
	Contrast control ◑ is turned too far one way or the other.	Turn contrast control until display appears.
	Brightness control ☼ is turned too far one way or the other.	Turn brightness control ☼ clockwise until display appears.
Screen display vibrates slightly.	Input signal from the computer needs adjustments.	There may be a problem with the computer. Contact your dealer.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	REMEDY
Screen display rolls up or down.	Vertical hold control is misadjusted.	Rotate vertical hold control until display stabilizes.
Screen characters are either taller or shorter than normal.	Vertical size control is misadjusted.	Rotate vertical size control until display is satisfactory.

Problems switching from one program to another:

Here are some common problems you might run into when switching from one program to another.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	REMEDY
Gibberish appears on the screen when you attempt to switch from one program to another by turning the power off, then on again.	The first program wasn't entirely erased from memory before the next program was loaded.	Wait 15 seconds before restarting your computer. Better yet, switch from one program to another by pressing , **control**, and **reset** at the same time.

Problems extricating yourself from a program

Most programs give you an easy way out. If your program doesn't have a Quit option on the menu, try these escape methods (until you find one that works):

- Press **Q** for Quit.
- Press **ESC**.
- Press **control** and **C** at the same time.
- Press **control** and **C**, then press **return** at the same time.
- Press **control** and **reset** at the same time.
- Turn off the power.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Problem Report Form

What were you trying to do?

What machine were you using? _____

What program were you using? _____

What operation were you attempting? _____

_____

What was the last correct operation? _____

_____

_____

What happened?

What was on the screen? _____

_____

What was the print out? _____

What did the computer do (noises, lights, beeps)? _____

What did you do? _____

_____

_____

Was the operation new or different? If yes, how? _____

_____

What did you do to try to solve the problem? _____

Check the HELP screen: _____

Check all connections: _____

Check version of DOS: _____

Look in the manual: _____

Reboot the computer: _____

Try a different machine: _____

Try different copy or program: _____

Other: _____

_____

Do you have a back-up copy of your data? _____

_____

What was the solution? _____

_____

_____

_____

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